The
University of South Carolina
Libraries

Thomas Cooper Library

University of South Carolina - Thomas Cooper Library
PS 2892.R4 1800z cl

Curse of Clifton:

1 100 00727645

Library

Carolina

813.3
S728r

LIBRARY NUMBER

a122 59270 2n

This BOOK may be kept out THREE WEEKS ONLY, and is subject to a fine of TEN CENTS a day thereafter. It is due on the day indicated below:

RETRIBUTION;

OR,

THE MAIDEN'S DOWER.

A TALE OF PASSION.

BY

MRS. D. E. NEVITT SOUTHWORTH.

AUTHOR OF "THE DESERTED WIFE," "WINNY DARLING," "THE MOTHER-IN-LAW," "CURSE OF CLIFTON," ETC.

Rare
PS
2892
.R4
1800z

"For his was not that blind, capricious rage,
A word can kindle and a word assuage,
But the deep workings of a soul unmix'd,
With aught of pity where its wrath had fix'd."—BYRON.

"With groundless fears she thus her soul deceives:
What frenzy dictates, jealousy believes."—GAY.

"Absence, with all its pains,
Is by this charming moment wiped away."—THOMSON.

LONDON:
HENRY LEA, 22, WARWICK LANE,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

8 13.3
S728r

McKISSICK MEMORIAL LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, S. C.

INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

"A pure, transparent, pale, and radiant face,
Like to a lighted alabaster vase."—BYRON.

THERE are crimes amenable to human laws, tangible sins against life, limb, or purse; and these, when they are well proved, may be legally punished.

There are also intangible crimes—sins against mind, heart, or happiness—from the very spirituality of their nature amenable to no visible law, yet carrying in themselves the seeds of their own most bitter punishment—the punishment being nothing apart from or opposed to the sin, but simply the evil principle itself in its final stage of development. In these instances no law may be able to touch the guilty—no upbraidings of conscience torment him—no visible judgment of Heaven fall upon him—yet, as surely as the plant is produced from the seed, will the punishment be evolved from the sin; and inevitable as the pain that follows the contact of fire is the retribution that pursues crime.

The man whose sins and miseries have furnished me with an illustration of this subject was a pillar of strength to the state. Whenever it was known that he would make a speech in the Senate Chamber mechanics left their workshops, clergymen forsook their studies, judges descended from their benches, and ladies left their drawing-rooms and boudoirs, and all flocked to the Capitol to hear his words of eloquence—the eloquence of truth and justice.

He was "a burning and a shining light" in the church, and throughout all his native region of country he was cited as an illustrious example of exemplary piety and disinterested philanthropy.

He was the centre and support of a dependent family circle—the

focus and attraction of their warmest affections. He seemed to his household what Christ is to the church—their patriarch, priest, and friend—their best teacher and brightest example, the image and the glory of every exalted virtue and of every beneficent affection; and so the Tempter found him—for in this strong citadel of virtue lurked a traitor—spiritual pride—who smilingly left open a door for the entrance of the enemy.

Ah! *then* his reputation was as the bright star, athwart whose disc no cloud had passed; his honour, the city that had never withstood a siege; his Christian fidelity, the breast-plate that had never shivered a lance; his virtue, the integrity that had never suffered a temptation. He resembled a soldier glorying in his profession, but whose sword had never been tried in the battle.

My heroine was also in the higher walks of life. Her soul resembled an orient isle, of summer clime and genial soul, rich in fragrant shrubs, bright flowers, and fruitful vines; but, springing in the midst, appeared a tiny sapling, that, as it grew, cleared and charred a wide space around it. Sweet shrubs withered, bright flowers faded unblown, and fruit fell unripe and blighted from the vines, destroyed by the poisonous breath of the tree; and the name of the Upas in her soul was Vanity.

* * * * * * *

THOMAS COOPER LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, S. C. 29208

CONTENTS.

PAGE

Introductory Preface iii

CHAPTER I.

Alone she sat—Alone! 1

CHAPTER II.

The Ward and the Guardian 11

CHAPTER III.

The Legend—The Wooing 17

CHAPTER IV.

The Wedding 43

CHAPTER V.

The Beautiful Slave 52

CHAPTER VI.

Blindness—The Babe 57

CHAPTER VII.

Erminie Dozier's Story 73

CHAPTER VIII.

The False Beauty 88

CHAPTER IX.

The Unselfishness of Friendship 93

CHAPTER X.

The Grasp of the Destroyer 105

CHAPTER XI. PAGE
THE GUILTY PASSION 133

CHAPTER XII.
THE DEATH OF HESTER 148

CHAPTER XIII.
THE LAWYER AND THE WIDOWER 160

CHAPTER XIV.
THE WAVERING LOVER 165

CHAPTER XV.
THE ORPHAN BABE 173

CHAPTER XVI.
THE FIRST QUARREL 184

CHAPTER XVII.
JEALOUSY AND ITS CONSEQUENCE 208

CHAPTER XVIII.
THE DEAD ALIVE 220

CHAPTER XIX.
THE FALSE RECONCILIATION 229

CHAPTER XX.
RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE 241

CHAPTER XXI.
CONCLUSION 263

THE WIFE'S TEMPTATIONS 273

THE WIDOW AND HER SON 373

RETRIBUTION;

OR,

THE MAIDEN'S DOWER.

A TALE OF PASSION.

CHAPTER I.

Alone she sat—alone! that worn-out word,
So lightly spoken and so coldly heard;
Yet all that poets sing, or grief hath known
Of life laid waste—knells in that word—alone!—
THE NEW TIMON.

"COME, girls! come! Let's build castles," exclaimed a mirthful little sprite of fourteen springs, to her school-mates, as they were assembled one evening in the recreation grounds of the "Institution," "Come, Louisa, do you begin. Tell us, as the corner-stone of your castle, upon what sort of a cavalier of high renown you would think of bestowing the honour and blessing of your white and jewelled hand."

"Me? Oh! None of your cavaliers! None of your Signior Don Monsieur Whiskerandos at all. None of your moustached, cigar-smoking gentlemen, who would spend all his time in green-rooms and coffee-houses, while I should be mending his old clothes at home. No, no! I mean to marry a young, gay, good-humoured sea-captain, who shall adore me above all things; who shall make long voyages to distant countries, and bring me back rich shawls and jewels, rare curiosities and beautiful monsters, and then take himself off again, before I

get tired of him. I want to be loved, and petted, and pleased; that's what I want to be," said Louisa.

"And you, Alice?" said the self-constituted questioner, continuing the examination.

Alice Bland, a mild, fair, dignified girl, of reserved manners, turned away her head without replying.

Louisa Bright put in for her, exclaiming, saucily—

"Oh! I'll speak for Alice. She would like a tall, dark, handsome man, distinguished in one of the learned professions, or filling with great honour to himself some high official station. I think it not impossible that she might be induced to become the 'lady' of some future President. *N'est ce pas*, Alice?"

"Possibly, if moral and intellectual excellence had raised him to that high station—not otherwise; for I would not be the wife of a selfish and corrupt politician, even if his intrigues had raised him to a perpetual dictatorship."

"Hear her, young ladies! Who would have suspected the lurking of ambition beneath that calm exterior? But here comes Hester Grey. I'll wager my coral beads, that if her choice were known, it would be some sombre-visaged clergyman, of the Methodist persuasion. Ha, Hester?"

"I really do not know."

"You do. Your are more of a 'dreamer of dreams' than any of us. Come! At least give us your notion of an 'admirable Crichton.' Your *beau ideal* and your ideal beau."

"I have none; but here is Fanny Gales, the little romp—call her up to judgment. Come here, Fanny, little darling; tell the girls what sort of a man it would amuse you to torment to death."

"Oh! Aunt Huldah says she hopes I'll never marry 'any of the abominable men,' but maintain my independence like herself. She says that human nature is bad enough at best, but that men-folks are far the worst half of it. She thinks that it's only the women and children that save the world from a general conflagration; for in all the good books she reads—nice books, that tell all about Satan and a great many other beautiful things—she says there is a great deal said about 'the wickedness of men,' but nothing about the wickedness of women; and so she says she hopes I'll never marry any of the abom—"

"Hush! don't repeat her profane language, and don't mind what she says either; she's a cross-grained, crabbed old maid. I don't believe that gentlemen are so sinful; my brother aint," said Louisa.

"Nor I, either," said Alice. "My father is not."

"Nor I," said each of the girls.

"No, nor Miss Huldah Gales either, dear girls," interrupted Hester. "She is like many of her class and profession; she denounces human nature, but she has faith in and love towards the human race, from the teachings of God's Spirit in her own true and loving heart. She denounces human nature in the gross, and approves of it in the individual. She reprobates the whole human family generally, and loves and tries to serve every member of it that comes under her notice; and, Fanny, I know of no greater danger that threatens you, than that your aunt may at last throw you away upon some swindler and pick-pocket, who will persuade both her and you that he is both a saint and a prince."

"Dear me. Hester is so wise."

"And so womanish!"

"And such a bore!" mutually said the young ladies, as they dropped off, one after another, and left the grave, pale girl alone, as usual.

A plain person, delicate health, and serious turn of mind, had no attractions for the bevy of gay beauties that had left her, and though her earnest, ardent, sympathetic nature, sometimes drove her to seek a friend and companion from among her school-mates, she was always—not repulsed—but avoided, shunned, shrunk from, as in fear and aversion. And so it had been from the date of her first entrance into the school, ten years before.

This was a sore trial to Hester Grey, who stood alone, without friend or relative in the world. And this it was that drove her thoughts in upon herself; or if out into the future, it was not to dissipate themselves in school-girl visions of gay company and dress, of parties and balls, of courtship and marriage, but to luxuriate in the idea of a perfect friendship. This was fast becoming the one idea of her mind, and it now occupied her as she sat upon the slope after the girls had gone.

I do not know that you would consider Hester a repulsive

object as she sat there. I will describe her faithfully, and then you can judge

She was rather below the medium height, slight in frame, thin in flesh, and dark in complexion; she had shining, dark brown hair, divided like folds of black satin over her forehead, brought down over her ears, and braided in a circular knot at the nape of her neck, giving one, at a little distance, the idea of a closely-fitting round black cap. Her face is a difficult one to describe, but altogether characteristic. Her forehead is large and full in the upper portion, but slopes downward and inward towards the nose. A phrenologist would describe it as well developed in the reflective organs, but deficient in the perceptive; and hence, perhaps, if there is any truth in phrenology, her lonely reveries, and unfitness for social success. Her eyebrows were black and straight, and nearly met at her nose. Her eyes were large, full, and gray, and brilliant sometimes, when her soul came to the windows and looked forth. Her lips were beautifully curved and very expressive. Her face, generally, was thin and wasted, from the wide apart temples to the small chin. She usually wore a brown or gray merino dress, and a small white collar.

Now, as she sat upon the bank, with her elbow resting upon her knee, and her chin upon her hand, with her lips sadly pressed together, and her eyelids dropping till they nearly touched her pale cheek, of what was she thinking? The one morbid idea.

"I wonder why the girls go and leave me so. I like them all; I could love Alice dearly, if she would let me. Why will she not let me? Will it always be so? Shall I have to carry through life this lonely, lonely heart, to bear through seventy or eighty heavy, heavy years, this importunate, craving want of sympathy,

"Oh! I would give every other blessing that I have—my broad lands and full coffers—for one frail fairy favour—for beauty—that I might be loved." And continuing the same train of ideas, her mind passed from the contemplation of feminine friendship to the thought of that one complete friendship "that kills the flock of all affections else." "Yes," thought she, "I, too, am a dreamer of dreams and 'a seer of visions,' but never deceive myself with the hope that my dreams

will be realized, or that my visions are prophetic. And, by-the-by, I wonder whether any other girl's heart is like mine; for my thoughts and feelings upon one subject are so different from the thoughts and feelings expressed by other girls, in truth, so diametrically opposite. Decidedly, I am unique, or they are uncandid. For example: they each express a wish to be adored and worshipped by their lovers or husbands. Now, I could not tolerate a man who could adore me, for that would show inferiority in him, and I could only love one more excellent than myself. I could only love one strong in mind and in body, lofty in intellect and in morality; a spirit whose majesty should attract mine with a superior force, constraining veneration, faith, love, from mine, as its natural tribute. Yes," said Hester, in a low whisper, "a spirit in whose wisdom I could find a perfect guide—in whose strength, a perfect support—in whose love, a perfect shelter."

"And that is God, the father of thy spirit, Hester—

"'Oh, lay thy lovely dreams aside,
Or raise them unto heaven,'"

murmured the low voice of Hester's teacher, as her hand was laid caressingly upon her shoulder. Hester's pale cheek flushed at having spoken her last words aloud, and she was silent.

"Why do you sit out here in the chill air, my love? You will take a severe cold."

"Oh! a slight cold more or less, will do me no harm, Mrs. Nichols. You know I have this cough every fall and winter, whether I stay in the house or not. It does not seem to affect my general health, though."

"Hester, I would not say it to any one less careless upon the subject than yourself, but unless you take better care of yourself you will not live to be twenty years old."

"That were 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,' I sometimes think," said Hester. "I am very lonesome, I have no friend."

"Am I not your friend, my dear?"

"You are the friend of all the girls, dear Mrs. Nichols. I should like to monopolize some one's friendship."

"Your whole soul concentrates itself upon one idea, pours itself out in one all-absorbing desire—to love and to be loved

—to meet some being to whom you will be all in all, and who will be everything to you; and this is intense, because of your isolated position, and hopeless, because of personal plainness. Is it not so?"

Hester was silent.

"I *know* it is," said the teacher.

"Come, Hester, you said I was the friend of all the pupils, and therefore eschewed my friendship. Well, I have not been in the institution long enough to select a favourite, even if it were proper to do so; but, come, Hester, accept my services and companionship, such as they are, and let me be your physician to prescribe for this young brain-sickness."

And drawing Hester's arm within her own, she led her into the house.

Hester Gray had been left an orphan, at the age of eight years, by the death of both her parents. She was the heiress of an immense estate in Virginia. She had resided eight years at a northern female academy, and was consequently sixteen years old at the opening of this story. During these eight years, her mind had been crowded with a vast amount of crude undigested learning. She had a passion for acquiring, but no tact in appropriating knowledge to the development of her mind. She was of a peculiarly nervous and sensitive temperament; for, with an exquisite ear for music, she abandoned the study of the science in disgust, because her first unskilful touches of the keys elicited discordant notes that wounded her sense; and with a positive passion for historic painting, she had thrown away her pencils, because her first sketches were monsters instead of beauties; and this her teachers permitted, because she had not parents or relatives to take an interest in her progress, and her guardian was absent and indifferent.

The new interest taken in Hester by Mrs. Nichols had a very salutary effect upon her. The good little woman sought out the natural bent of her pupil's intellectual faculties, and assisted her to develope them. And an event that soon occurred at the school added new warmth and life to Hester's hitherto cold existence.

"We have a new pupil coming, Hester," said Mrs. Nichols one evening, "and as Alice Bland is going away at Christmas, Miss Summers (that is her name) will share your room. I

hope you will find her a more genial companion than our stately Alice."

Hester looked up; indifferently, however.

"You should be friendly, at least. Like you, she is an orphan without friend or relative on earth, but, unlike you, she is a foreigner and penniless."

Hester became decidedly interested.

"Who is she, Mrs. Nichols?"

"Her name is Juliette Summers. She lives now in Alexandria, my native town, in the family of Mrs General Summers. This is her story: A few weeks after the horrible massacre of St. Domingo, a vessel put in at the port of Alexandria, having on board as a passenger a fugitive from that island, an Italian lady of singular beauty, whose husband and children, with the exception of one babe, had perished by the hands of the insurgents. She and her infant had been saved, and conveyed on board an American ship, through the efforts of a faithful slave. At the time of her arrival at the port of Alexandria, her mind, from dwelling on the horrors of the past, had sunk into melancholy madness. She and her child were entirely helpless, and she was perfectly inert. She might have remained on shipboard for ever, for any volition of her will to leave it. Indeed, so deep was her apathy, that she had never changed her clothes during the whole time of the voyage. She was cast there helpless and useless on the shores of a foreign country, where no one expected or desired her. To the credit of Alexandria however, I must say, that she and her little daughter excited a great deal of sympathy—but, good heavens, Hester! you are weeping. Don't agitate yourself so about things that happened twelve years ago: there, there, it's all over now. Well, as I said, Mr. Summers, a wealthy merchant, and owner of the ship, received this poor Guillietta Nozzalina into his family, where, in less than a year, death put a period to her suffering."

"Did you ever see her, Mrs. Nichols?" asked Hester, through her tears.

"Yes, but seldom. She disliked society, of all things. One of the largest and most pleasant rooms in Mr. Summers's house was assigned to her use, and this room she would not be persuaded to leave. She gave a great deal of trouble to Mrs.

Summers and the young ladies; not, poor thing, that she was exacting, but she seemed to have no use of herself, and would fall a weeping if any service was proffered her. Besides, she would never dress herself, or do up her hair, or suffer any one else to do it for her; and as she would never leave her room for any purpose, her meals had to be taken up to her. At last, the young ladies made her a set of white wrappers, very nice and tasteful they were, and easy to be put on or off. There was no doing anything with her hair, though. If it were put up one moment, she would turn her head about as if it oppressed her, and finally shake it down and send it flying over her shoulders. I have seen her sometimes, when she was restless, walking the floor, with her long black hair streaming down in strong relief against her white dress. She had beautiful hair! Indeed, she had been a very beautiful woman."

"And did she *never* leave her room until her death?"

"Never but once—upon the occasion of the eldest Miss Summers's marriage. Rose Summers, after a long opposition from her parents, was at last going to be married for love, and, of course, she was very happy, and her own joy only softened her heart to a more tender sense of poor Madame Nozzalina's misery, and so she was frequently in her room, and caressed, and coaxed, and kissed her so much, and insisted so earnestly, that she couldn't feel happy unless her dear Guillietta joined the company in the saloon, that the poor lady, who possessed a sweet, grateful heart, finally consented. So Rose prepared a rich, plain, black velvet robe, with falls of Brussels lace, and upon the evening of the marriage, insisted upon Guillietta's assuming it.

"I assisted at her toilet upon that occasion, and it was affecting to see her try to smile—try to be cheerful. Oh! there was no more warmth in her smile than in the beams of moonlight on snow. Her pale, taper fingers were as cold as clay; I felt them as I clasped at jet bracelet on her wrist. I thought, but did not venture to say so, that it was a cruel mistake in Rose Summers to deck off so much sorrow, and parade it before such company. Mrs. Summers permitted it, because she hoped it would rouse Madame Nozzalina. It did rouse her to a fever of excitement that was never calmed; and she sunk under it in three or four days."

"That was strange."

"No; she was quiet only from having been let alone. As soon as she found herself in that brilliant saloon, something in the scene seemed to remind her forcibly of the past. Perhaps the picture of her own marriage was visibly presented to her. I think so, because she was a Roman Catholic, and so were the Summers's. And she and Rose must have been married by the same rites, for it was while the ceremony was in progress that her excitement reached its highest pitch, and she left the room; every one was too much engaged to notice her then, and it was not until the next morning that the servant, who carried up her breakfast, discovered her state."

"And the baby?"

"Little Juliette was adopted by Mr. Summers. Twelve years, however, make changes in all families. Mr. Summers failed; in fact, they lived too much like princes. Soon after his failure he died, and the wreck of his property was divided among his large family of sons and daughters. The establishment has lately been broken up. Old Mrs. Summers has gone to live with her eldest son, General Summers, and Juliette finds a temporary home under his roof. Juliette, now sixteen years old, has written to me for advice. I have proposed to the principal to receive her here and complete her education, to prepare her for becoming a governess; her school bills to be paid out of her salary after she shall have obtained employment. The principal has acceded to this proposition, and we are daily expecting Juliette, who will become your room-mate."

"Poor Juliette! poor, dear Juliette! She shall be my own sister. Oh! Mrs. Nichols, I am so grateful to you for thinking of putting her with me."

Soon after, the friends separated; for it was getting late, and Hester wished to go to her room and to bed, where she generally laid awake, and did all her castle building. A hundred plans for the future, all growing out of the arrival of Juliette Summers, filled her generous and romantic mind. Now, for the first time in her life, she experienced a keen sense of enjoyment, in the consciousness of the power of conferring happiness afforded her by the possession of wealth.

"Juliette shall not go out governessing. I have heard that it is a hard trying life. No one but a mature woman, of

strong mind and blunted sensibility, is fit for it. No; Juliette shall be my own sister; she shall come and live with me when she completes her education. I shall never marry; no man will ever love me. But I shall not be lonely. I will throw myself into Juliette's welfare for happiness. Juliette and Juliette's family, when she marries, shall be my care."

Hester had mounted her steed of imagination, and it had galloped away with her into the distant and unknown regions of futurity. But then Hester was romantic and peculiar, and scarcely sixteen.

The next morning the orphan beauty arrived, so tired, she begged to be allowed to keep her room all day, and Hester solicited the favour of a holiday to bear her company. Although Hester's feelings were so ardent, and her purposes so beneficent to the young stranger, she restrained herself, and her manner toward Juliette, though kind, was very delicate. She feared to alarm the pride and wound the sensibility which, judging by herself, she ascribed to the young gir

Hester Gray, from a want of perception, and from a habit of reverie, turned always inward—a sort of inverted observation—was constantly ascribing those feelings and motives to others that chiefly actuated herself.

She was somewhat, but not unpleasantly, disappointed in the appearance of Mis. Summers.

Juliette had not the serious, gentle, unobtrusive air with which Hester had invested the beautiful and helpless orphan. As Miss Summers joined the young ladies in their recreation-room, upon the evening of the day of her arrival, she appeared a superb beauty, with the air and manner of a princess. She was a tall and fi ely formed brunette. Her small and classic head sat proudly above a chest and shoulders of unequalled grace and luxuriant beauty. Her abundant and shining black hair was trained to droop in large, smooth, glossy ringlets on each side of a face whose richness of complexion could only have come from Italy. But the glory of that matchless face were the large black eyes, with their long black fringes, so dusky and brooding one instant so melting and suffused the next, and suddenly so resplendent with light and soul, and, upon occasion, so fierce and flaming in anger. There was a mesmeric spell in those eyes. Indeed, the sinister and inviting

coquette had once, in an unguarded hour, asserted that she had "only to look into the eyes of a man to make him love" her. And this was Hester Grey's prospective protegée—a beautiful, fascinating, but selfish, unprincipled, intriguing girl—to whom the plain, simple-hearted, and generous heiress furnished a most convenient, profitable, and easy dupe. Miss Summers looked a lady to whom you would hesitate to offer the affront of a favour, but she was a girl who could not only receive, but solicit a favour with the air of conferring an honour.

But Hester was happy. She had now a channel and reservoir for the flow and deposit of her love and benevolence. And Miss Summers, to do her justice, exercised an exquisite tact in making her young patron feel highly promoted and supremely blessed in serving her. So Hester was in the enjoyment of a "fool's paradise"—if that pure spirit, which, unconscious of and uninfluenced by the outward and surrounding existence of selfishness and guile, forming in itself a Heaven of hope, trust, and love, could be called the creator and denizen of a "fool's paradise."

The "kingdom of Heaven" or the dominion of Satan is within us. A devil would be a devil still, and miserable in heaven; an angel would be an angel still, and preserve his purity and joy in pandemonium—since Satanic passions kindle the hell, and Christian affections create the heaven.

CHAPTER II.

THE WARD AND THE GUARDIAN.

"She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes."—BYRON.

THE last year of Miss Grey's residence at school drew near its close. Christmas was approaching, and there was to be the usual examination of the pupils, and then the breaking up for the holidays. There was great emulation among the young ladies, and Hester felt very anxious that her friend, Miss Summers, should distinguish herself, and urged, encouraged, and

assisted her accordingly. But Juliette was averse to study, and seemed to have a taste only for drawing room accomplishments. Her special talent lay in music, and there was no doubt that she would distance all competitors for the highest prize in that science.

One evening Juliette had thrown away her books, and was sitting in a musing attitude before her mirror. Shall we dive down into the deep of the young girl's heart, and see what is passing there? Vague and indistinct, but strong emotions of the spirit, which if arranged into thought, would read thus: "I do not care for these school prizes! They are beneath my desire, as beyond my reach. I should as soon wish for the stars of Heaven to spangle my dress, or the rainbow for a scarf, as think of these high honours. Besides, what girl in her senses would think of purchasing even the highest honours of her school at the price of red eyes and yellow cheeks. Preposterous! No, no; let Hester, with her broad forehead and sharp chin, carry off all the praise and glory of the coming exhibition; I shall vanquish hearts, and, from among the number, select one in a golden case" And glowing with the thought, Juliette arose with a burning cheek and sparkling eye, and caught her beautiful reflection in the mirror.

"Yes," said she, exultingly, "I am a beauty. Thank Heaven, that has given me beauty instead of wealth, station, or genius;" and her lovely lips budded into a half-blown smile as she said it There was a little thin arm wound around her waist, and a little pale cheek leaned against her bosom, and the low voice of Hester murmured—

"Ah Juliette, love, you are right in thanking Heaven for your gift of beauty. I do not agree with the old saws that would have us disparage it. It is a gift of high value, this 'mere physical beauty,' as it is sometimes contemptuously called Like all other blessings, of wealth, talent, or station, it involves a serious responsibility."

"Oh! you sweet, solemn, absurd Hester!" said Juliette, gathering her to her bosom. "To talk of beauty's responsibility! when you know very well its only responsibility is to look as charming aspossible."

Hester returned the caress, and gently extricating herself, said—

"It is an agent of great power, Juliette, this beauty. A beautiful woman's chances of happiness and usefulness are multiplied a hundred fold, if she only knows and feels the real deep value and purpose of her beauty. Its infinite powers of eloquence should be enlisted on the side of right. What language can so soon penetrate to the heart, winning it to thoughts of mercy and justice, as the melting beams of a clear dark eye! What word can reach the soul, inspiring it to deeds of heroic self-sacrifice or enduring toil, like the light of a pure spirit when it flashes through eyes of beauty! Yes, Juliette, thank Heaven for your matchless loveliness, but do not degrade or pervert it. I sometimes wish that I were beautiful."

"You would not pervert its purpose, I know."

Hester smiled.

"I don't know. 'I can better teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.' Juliette, I am going to tell you a phenomenon of my own mind. I seldom think of my looks. Yet, nevertheless, I feel as if I were beautiful; so when I come upon my reflection suddenly before a mirror, I start and feel shocked. The face and figure do not seem to be my own. It has always been thus with me. I have never got used to myself. It is very strange. I wonder if I am alone in that?"

"I believe you are alone in that, dear Hester, but it is not strange; I think I can explain it," said the wily girl. "You have a beautiful spirit, and you are more conscious in your spirit than in your person; thence you always feel beautiful in the spirit; and when you suddenly see its outward and visible clothing, you are startled, as you said;" but Juliette, as she spoke, turned away her head to conceal the sarcastic smile that she could not repress. Turning around again, presently she said—

"But come, tell me, Hester dearest, how comes it, in the dispensation of Providence, that you, who would use the blessing so well, are not so lovely as you wish to be, for you are really very pretty, Hester?"

Passing over the impudent flattery of the last clause, Hester replied—

"I have interpreted the trial in this way: I know not if correctly. In this soul of mine there exists a vast capacity

for, and propensity to, inordinate affection. All natural claimants of my love 'sleep in the dust of the earth.' My affections are hoarded up only to be lavished on the one who shall seek and call them out. And, Juliette, I am constantly and involuntarily thinking of, and even expecting to meet with, such a one. It is a strong tendency in my nature that I have to resist. I know, I feel, that if I should ever love at all, I should intensely—that my whole soul would be absorbed in the one passion—that all the highest affections, hopes, and aspirations, that should seek a home in Heaven and an enjoyment in God, would settle upon earth; and earth would be my Heaven."

"But this is very extravagant, Hester."

"I know it is, and therefore, as I said, I am not endowed with beauty, and—I believe I shall never be blessed with domestic love, for I could not keep affection within its proper limits."

"I love you, dear Hester."

"You are my *friend*, Juliette, and your friendship has blessed me; but, ah! dear girl, there is still a great void unfilled—a vast want unsatisfied."

Still Hester's soul was in a transition state. It was slowly and feebly struggling from weakness and darkness into light and strength.

Miss Miller, the principal of the school, at this moment sailed majestically into the room, and, addressing herself to Hester, said—

"A gentleman from your guardian awaits you in the drawing-room, Miss Grey."

Hester arose, courtesied, and left the room, thinking, "who can it be?"

Miss Miller remained, and sinking gracefully into a chair, she remarked, in the cold and distant tone which she generally assumed to the beautiful orphan, toward whom she had conceived an aversion too justly grounded, perhaps—"I am fortunate in having this opportunity of a tête-à-tête presented, Miss Summers. As at the commencement of the next term I expect to receive an accession of pupils, it will be out of my power to accommodate you longer than the expiration of *this* term. It is my best advice, therefore, that you advertise immediately for the place of a governess."

Juliette received this "notice to quit" with the air of an empress, and slightly bent her haughty little head, to throw it up more haughtily than before, as you have seen a lily bow for an instant, and with a new impetus spring back more proudly than ever. At looking at her teacher, her glance plainly said—

"Well! have you any thing more to present? If not, you have permission to withdraw," so plainly that the principal did withdraw—her dislike to her pupil not at all diminished by the interview.

"It's not worth while to control one's natural feelings, and to use one's powers of fascination upon a schoolmistress. Such persons should be kept in their places," thought Juliette, totally regardless of her dependence on, and obligations to, the lady in question. "And happily," continued her thought, "I need not become a teacher myself; Hester's friendship will save me from that degradation—the last of the Nozzalini."

In the mean time Hester had passed into the parlour. As she entered, a gentleman advanced to meet her, took her hand with an air of mingled deference and affection, and led her to a seat, saying, as he stood before her, before seating himself—

"I have the pleasure of speaking to Miss Hester Grey, our young ward."

"That is my name. Colonel Dent, I presume?"

The stranger bowed an acknowledgment, and then, with a grave countenance, and in deep, full, serious tones, said—

"My father, Miss Grey, lies at the point of death. He wishes to see you placed in possession of your home before he departs, and has commissioned me, if agreeable to yourself, to conduct you to 'The Vale' immediately. Can you be ready by the day after to-morrow?"

"Oh, yes! Before that; to morrow or to-night. Do not let us delay a moment longer than necessary. I would not upon any account keep you an instant from the bedside of your father. Oh, I feel for him so much."

Then the deep rich tones replied, "My father has lived an earnest life, Miss Grey, and prepares to render up his soul without regret, and without fear."

"But you—oh, I feel so sorry for you—you'll be alone, then, just as I am!" said she, simply.

He looked into the serious, earnest little face of the young girl, and pitying her, said, "No, Hester; no human being need ever suffer loneliness. The most perfect communion of spirits that can be conceived, is the union of the human soul with the Divine Spirit of its Father and Creator. Listen, Hester—Miss Grey! Under our human organization, not one millionth portion of our thoughts, feelings, or sentiments; of our hopes, fears, or desires; of our sufferings or enjoyments, can be communicated to another, however near to us that other may be—yet all are known to God, our Father. Think, then, that if we purify our hearts, and seek a union with the Divine mind, how perfect that communion may be—how in days of the most severe suffering, of the most terrible temptations, in that arid desolation—when we are, as it were, broken on the wheel of life—we may feel, with deep joy, that 'I am not alone, for my Father is with me.'"

"Oh! but this infinite power, wisdom, and goodness—how shall we find Him?"

"Some are driven for shelter to the Father's bosom by the storms of life; some are won thither by the sunshine; few very few, seek him of their own free will."

Colonel Dent rose to go, saying—

"It will be convenient, you think, Miss Grey, for you to leave here to-morrow morning?"

"Yes, sir, I will be ready."

Colonel Dent then took his departure, leaving in Miss Grey's hand a packet, which, when opened, proved to contain bank notes to the amount of two hundred dollars.

"Oh! I am so glad of this!" she said; "this will enable me to get something pretty for Mrs. Nichols and Juliette. Dear Juliette shall have that coveted diamond ring now, to encircle her pretty snowy finger."

Hurrying up stairs, she found Juliette all ready for her, in a sea of tears, at the thought of parting with her dearest Hester. Miss Grey said and did all she could think of to console her protegée. She called Juliette her dearest friend—the chosen sister of her heart—assured her, that if she would only consent to remain at the institution another year, at her own cost, until she had accomplished herself on the paino and harp, and perfected her knowledge of French and Italian, that she should

then come to her to share her home and fortune. All this Hester earnestly assured her she might accept, without compromising her dignity, from her bosom friend, her adopted sister. After some considerable delay, occasioned by the finesse and pretended reluctance of Miss Summers, this plan was finally determined upon between the two friends, and in the course of the evening, received the concurrence of Miss Miller.

"There is one thing, however, that I must beg of you, sweet Hester; and that is, to write me letters every week. Will you, love?" Hester replied by a warm caress.

Long before the dawn the next morning, a light was struck in Hester's room, and she arose to dress herself in the chill morning air. Juliette, in her dressing gown, was shivering by her side. Soon the sound of wheels was heard to stop at the door, and the stage horn blew. Hester hurried on her cloak and hood; and catching Juliette in her arms in a last farewell embrace, hastened down stairs, where she was met and conducted to the door by Mrs. Nichols. Out before the door, looming through the dark, stood the large old-fashioned stage coach, and beside it towered the tall figure of Colonel Dent, who came up to her immediately, and with a hasty salutation, handed her into the coach.

CHAPTER III.

THE LEGEND—THE WOOING.

"Oh! there is sweetness in the mountain air,
And life which blunted ease may never hope to share."—
BYRON.

THE history of Hester, for some time after her departure from school, will be best described in her own words, addressed at intervals to her friend Juliette:—

THE VALE, December 19, 179—.

"Bad as the chance was, I hope you received my first letter, dear Juliette, giving you a detailed account of our journey, and particularly the night we passed at Monticello. My guardian had a most interesting conversation with Mr. Jefferson, upon a subject that then occupied the thoughts of both—the gradual abolition of slavery. My guardian took Monticello in his way,

in order to solicit Mr. Jefferson, when he should pass through our part of the country, to come and see the operation of his experiment farm, worked entirely by hired coloured labourers. Of this experiment I will tell you more by-and-by.

Now I wish to give you some account of the family of my guardian, whom I found here in charge of my patrimony. We arrived here so late at night, that I retired to rest without seeing General Dent. In the morning, however, I was conducted to his room. He is evidently very near the elucidation of the great secret of life and death. He looks forward to it with a subdued, earnest joy, as far removed from presumption as from despair. He received me with much affection; telling me that he was my father's companion in arms during the revolutionary struggle; that a wound he received in battle had made him an invalid for many years, and prevented him travelling north to see me; that it is of this wound he is dying at last.

* * * * * *

DECEMBER 20.

It is all over now. Ernest Dent, the patriot, philanthropist, and martyr, sleeps with his fathers. With too profound a sense of the awful solemnity of the passage, to meet death lightly; with too firm a faith in God, to meet it reluctantly, he obeyed the summons in the same spirit in which he received it weeks before; a spirit as far from presumption as from fear.

You may think, I dare say, that it is a very common dispensation of Divine Providence, the loss of a father to a grown man, and so may not feel inclined to sympathize with Colonel Dent in his loss. But this is an uncommon case. The relation subsisting between Ernest Dent and his son possessed all the tenderness and respect of paternal and filial affection, with the familiarity and confidence of fraternal love. And it could scarcely have been otherwise. Ernest married at an unusually early age—eighteen—was the father of Ernest junior the next year. Ernest the elder at thirty-seven, and his son at eighteen, joined the patriot army together; fought side by sideduring the whole war. They were together last at Yorktown, where the elder Dent received his so lately mortal wound. They sheathed their victorious swords simultaneously

at the close of the war. Their labours were not over now, however. Fired with the love of liberty, glowing with gratitude to God, who had so lately delivered them from a foreign yoke, wishing to prove their gratitude by giving as freely as they had received, their first act was the manumission of all their slaves, and they bent their thoughts to the emancipation of their race. True, it did not then look like the labour of turning the earth back in its orbit, or seem to require a faith like that of Joshua, when he commanded the sun to stand still in the heavens. Enthusiastic with their recent glorious triumph over oppression, and their new enjoyment of national independence, the halls of legislation became the very temples of Liberty, thrown freely open to the discussion of any plan for political or social improvement. And no topic was so welcome then as that of the Legislature. There, again, in another manner, they were brothers in arms, and co-labourers in the cause of Liberty for many years, until the latent ill effects of the elder Dent's wound became so distressing as to confine him to the house; much of the time to his bed. Still his son was in the Legislature, and plans of emancipation, elaborated from the brain of the patriot, found their way through his brother-son to the Senate hall of the Commonwealth. These were then freely admitted and discussed; but, as years went by, opposition arose against them. The season had gone by; the enthusiasm in the cause of general emancipation, raised by their recent glorious victories in the cause of Liberty, had subsided. Like that of self-deceived converts to Christianity, they had become false to their first love, recreant to their first faith, lukewarm in the cause of universal liberty. And projects for the emancipation of mankind were fast giving way before selfish (miscalled patriotic) plans of national glory and emolument. And now you can understand, Juliette, how iron-knitted must have been this friendship. I have a strong, secret conviction, that this close union of heart with heart, and mind with mind, in one holy cause, has prevented the younger Dent from wishing to marry up to this day.

It was about this time that my lamented father died in Paris, (whither he had been sent by Government,) and Colonel Dent was appointed guardian of my little self and regent of my patrimony during my minority.

And now I am going to tell you that their position was very peculiar. Two men, of high moral feelings, with anti-slavery opinions, who had emancipated all their own slaves, left guardians to an infant heiress with three hundred negroes, and a large landed estate. Charged with its management, invested with the sole control, and irresponsible for the direction of its properties for many years, what did they do? In the possession of some capital, which they did not fear to risk, for the plain reason that they had made up their minds to its loss, if necessary, they resolved to try the practical effect of a plan they had long contemplated in theory. They came upon this farm. They found it very much like all other farms in this part of the country; ill-managed enough. Barns out of repair; fences staggering, or flat; half-starved cattle roaming at pleasure from field to field; troops of half-naked negro children lurking in squalid quarters, or sunning themselves in arid fields; one-third of the cleared land under indifferent cultivation, and two-thirds grown up in weeds and thistles; gangs of slave labourers loitering in the fields, spending one-third of the day pretending to hoe corn, and two-thirds leaning on their hoes; a low, stupid, and brutal overseer, who was idle and neglectful three days in the week, and cruel, exacting, and ferocious, the remainder, and capricious and unconscionable always. There was a soul wanting; the soul of a fiend in a vigilant, determined, and ferocious slave driver; such as seldom can be found among slave owners; or the soul of a philanthropist, who would take this land and people, and, by giving the latter a fair but fixed per centage of its products, make it their interest to cultivate the soil in the best manner.

This plan presented difficulties, but not insuperable obstacles; and I will tell you how my guardian met and overcame them. The plan did not even require money. The capital which they had resolved to appropriate to this experiment was kept as a reserved fund, in the event of necessity. They came here, as I said, and, to increase the chances of success to their experiment, they wished to examine the instruments and the material by which they and upon which they designed to act. They resolved, therefore, to work the farm for one year upon the old plan. The first thing to be done was to dismiss the overseer, and to direct in person all the work. Barns and fences were

repaired, and whitewashed or painted; pens and folds were built; weeds, thistles and decayed wood, were cleared up, collected, dried, and burnt, and returned to the soil as manure, &c.; and during all this the eyes of the experimenters were fixed keenly upon the negroes, with a view to discover and select the most competent and deserving among them to begin with. At the commencement of the new year, having assembled the slaves together, they selected half a dozen of the most industrious and faithful among them, and, setting aside the fact of their bondage, proposed to hire each one of them at a fair rate of wages, for one year, telling them that if this plan worked well, it would be continued, and would probably result in their entire manumission; further, that this privilege should be extended to all the adults on the plantation, as they should show themselves fit subjects of it, and then they dismissed their audience, to talk about the plan, but to doubt it.

These half a dozen men and women laboured hard, for they were now inspired with a hope, at least; and when, at the end of the month, they actually received their first wages, their hope was strengthened and confirmed, and acted as a powerful stimulant to the other negroes. In a few months, the beneficial effects of this plan began to be very apparent. The labour was more cheerfully and more faithfully performed. There was no more loitering over hoes, or sun-gazing—no more shirking work every time the eye of the overseer was off—no more feigning sickness, or grunting with premature old age—no more swindling and pilfering—and, on the part of the overseers, there was no more fretting, fuming, and swearing, to get the work done. This is a very slight sketch of the moral and physical benefits of the experiment upon owner, slaves and plantation, so far. But the project was and is progressive. In the course of the year, the privilege of working upon wages was extended to many other slaves, and at this moment they all enjoy that liberty, with the hope and prospect of its becoming unalienable by their entire manumission. All this that I have written you has been communicated to me by my guardian, in various conversations that I have held with him. And he proposes a plan for my consideration, viz.: that, as soon as I reach my majority, I shall illustrate that event by the immediate emancipation of all my people.

"You will lose nothing by it, Hester," said he; "I am prepared to show, from my accounts, that the income of the farm, after paying them their wages, from which they support themselves, is one-third greater than before, under the old system. You need not think, either, that they will leave the soil, or that, if they do, you will be in danger of embarrassment from the want of labourers. There are poor white people around you who are suffering for work. But your people will not leave the farm, unless you drive them off. The animal affections are all stronger in the African than in us; and among the strongest is their attachment to the soil upon which they were born and have been brought up."

I acceded to the plan very readily, and requested him to take all necessary steps, and have all the papers prepared for my signature, which I assured him should be affixed to them the very day I should become twenty-one! and this I have communicated to my people. Ah! Juliette, if I were to attempt to give you anything like a true picture of my deep joy in making the communication to them, or their gratitude and wild delight in receiving it, I should grow extravagant—I should rant. In short, I can trust myself to say nothing about it. Colonel Dent seemed to highly approve of my ready acquiescence in this plan (Why should he? There was nothing so very magnanimous in that) I feel, however, blessed in the approbation of so good a man. He conducted me all over the farm, and indeed it is the model farm of the county. It reminds me of the best farms in Pennsylvania, except that it must be far more productive, as far as one can judge from its appearance at this season, and that it is very much enlivened by the residence of the negroes upon it. Each family, I must tell you, has its little home on the land, as a part of their wages. I have brought my letter quite to the corner of the sheet, and have scarcely room to say that I will write to you again soon. God bless you.

HESTER GREY.

APRIL, 23, 179—.

Juliette, I am happy now. The cold, dense morning fog, that invested and concealed life and its purposes from my view,

is clearing up before the glorious sun of Christian Faith, and revealing the Heavens and the Earth—a landscape full of beauty and variety, an atmosphere full of light, and audible with music.

My health is established too—I am strong and elastic. I feel my life in every vein. Mrs. Wimsat, our housekeeper, says that it is the effect of the mountain air. I think it is the mountain occupation as well.

I have aims and objects now that occupy all my thoughts and employ all my faculties. I told you that Colonel Dent's plan was a progressive one. Our final object in wishing to make this farm the very best and most beautiful in the state, is that, first, our nearest neighbours, who have seen every stage of this improvement, and then others, may perceive its benefits, and be induced to adopt it—thus paving the way to an emancipation that shall be agreeable and profitable to all parties. We wish to demonstrate on this farm the practicability of this plan.

And this farm, Juliette, I long for you to see and admire it. It occupies the whole of a small green valley, containing about five hundred acres. It is nearly circular, being surrounded by steep hills, and behind them by high mountains. All in and out between the hills grow groups of forest trees. Dashing down from a mountain spring, and winding through this little valley, is a stream of pure water. Standing in the centre of this green valley is our homestead—a triangular building, with a very steep roof and long piazzas; and dotted about in the green fields, and beside the stream, and nestled under the trees, sit the little white cots of the negroes—each cot enlivened by its group of the wild, merry little imps, their children. The African race are constitutionally happy; they will be merry under the most depressing circumstances. You may therefore well imagine how they enliven this scene with their songs. Indeed, I am delighted with this plantation—like it far better than I should like a Pennsylvania farm. There one family resides upon the farm, and the hired labourers live off. Here many little families live upon the soil, each happy in itself, and all having a common interest in the plantation—having a general director in the owner of the land, who pays them fair wages, and who will make them free at the first opportunity.

I take long rides over the hills, that form the rim of my saucer-shaped farm—sometimes accompanied by Mrs. Wimsat, Marcus Derby, Col. Dent's nephew, or a farm boy, and occasionally by my guardian. By the way, the notion you formed of Col. Dent's appearance is not at all correct. He is a tall, stout, dark man, with large, clear-cut features, and a full eye, or rather full eyes; he has two of them. He is not the most desirable equestrian companion in the world, though. We do not get very far from the house before he sinks into silence, his horse drops into a walk, his hand rests upon his knee, his hold upon the bridle relaxes, and there he is! fallen into a deep fit of thinking, while his horse crawls along at the rate of a mile an hour; and at last he will break out into some such expression as this—

"Yes! Hester, that will do. They must see the beneficial results—nay, the ultimate and absolute necessity of the thing"

"What will do, Col. Dent, and who must see, and what must they see?"

And then will follow some unfailing plan for bringing about the Millennium, for the conceiving of which I forgive him all the boring wherewith he has bored me.

That is my philosophical companion; but I have a poetical one—Marcus Derby. He is called "a very handsome young man."

He trots along merrily enough until we begin to climb the hill; then he falls into an amble, and gazes around in silence for some time, and then ejaculates something like this: "Beautiful, transcendingly beautiful! That mist rests upon the mountain's brow like a bridal veil which the rising sun—the ardent bridegroom is trying to raise. Miss Grey, I could write a poem now!"

"Upon me, Mr. Derby?"

"Upon a piece of paper if I had it," he answers snappishly.

"Save it till you get home."

"Oh! decidely. Save it till I get home. No, indeed; that's always the way Miss Thalia and her sisters serve me. I came over this mountain last winter to collect a debt. Unpoetical errand enough. The ground was covered with snow and ice, and the sky was dark with clouds; an unlikely day for a young lady to turn out, you'll admit. Yet, as I was

climbing up this hill, suddenly broke out the sun, kindling up into blazing splendour the ice-clad scene, until the dazzling earth flashed back to Heaven a light as glorious as the sun himself. Oh! then, with fine dramatic effect, ambles up Miss Thalia herself, and places a whole pastoral poem in my hand, and, with the most seducing smile, assures me of her kind regards and continued favours. And then when I got home, opened my desk, laid out my paper, and (figuratively) put my hand in my pocket, lo! and behold the favours of the Muse had all turned to dust and dry leaves, like the gifts of a veritable Irish fairy. She is coquetting with me, Miss Grey; poking fun at me. She'll jilt me, but I'll cut her acquaintance."

Besides which, I have a sensible companion in Mrs. Wimsat, who rides with me when we go to the weaver's or the dyer's; for to take a voluntary ride, to no end, seems to strike the good lady as highly absurd. She tells me the names and history of all my neighbours, whose farms we pass, calling my attention particularly to the plantations owned by elderly spinisters, whose example she highly commends to me, advising me to ponder well before I marry, &c.

She need not be afraid. I have not the slightest idea of marrying, even if one wants me. I am too happy as I am.

Too happy as I am! My dear guardian—mine honoured guardian. His life is devoted to a purpose, and to the good of others, who, many of them, alas, stupidly and thanklessly receive his benefits, as pigs devour acorns, without ever looking up to see whence they come. No, I will never leave him; I will never marry; for now that his brother-father is dead, he has no companion but his ward, his pupil, who thanks God and her parents for leaving her in his care, and investing him with authority to guard and guide her. And I have no one on earth but my heaven-appointed guardian to look up to. My veneration is undivided—is concentrated upon the wisdom and goodness of my guardian. I am his child; my eyes wait on him all day; I could sit at his feet forever and learn; I am happy when he makes me a suggestion—happier if his suggestion involves a self-sacrifice on my part—happiest of all when my compliance wins his grave, beautiful smile of approval. His slightest intimation has for me a divine authority; it is happiness, enthusiasm, religion, to obey it. Let me describe to

you our daily life—but first let me give you a more distinct idea of our house. I said that it was a triangular building—that is, it consists of two long wings that meet in a triangle—they have long piazzas that meet at a central portico, through which is the principal entrance to the house. Immediately over this portico, in the second story, is Colonel Dent's study, a small but pleasant room. At the front end of these two long wings are two large bow windows; in front of these two windows grow two large old elm trees, and old forest trees are left standing all about the yard. Now for the interior of the house. The south wing is always shut up to keep nice for company, and state occasions of that sort. We do not live in it, and therefore I will not give you a minute description of it. On the first floor is the saloon, drawing-room, &c., and above, the spare bed-rooms (guest-chambers, as Mrs. Wimsat grandiloquently styles them). All these are furnished in a grand, old-fashioned, very inconvenient style. But our wing, where we live, I must introduce you to that. There are three rooms on the first floor, all in a line. The room at the end of the wing is our parlour; it has windows on three sides—that is, windows opening on the piazza, a large bow window in the end, and windows opening on the garden—so it ought to be very light, but it is not; for the elm tree in front of the bow window, and the shadow of the east mountain in the morning, and the shed of the piazza, and the locust trees on the garden side, throw the room into deep shade, rendering Mrs. Wimsat's paper blinds, and dark chintz curtains worse than useless. The floor is covered with a home-made, red and green plaid carpet. And straight, tall, high-backed old chairs made of carved oak, black with age, and covered with leather, and stuffed—with pebbles, I think, they are so hard—are formally ranged round the room. There is an old-fashioned settle, that is, a sort of short sofa, with an exaggerated high back. This has been stuffed with shucks and covered with blue cloth, by our thrifty housekeeper. And then there is an old-fashioned family work-table, invented by my great-great-grandmother, for the use of herself and her seven daughters; it is octagon-shaped, and each division of the octagon contains a little drawer that goes off in a point toward the centre of the table, so that all the little drawers meet at the centre like the spokes of a cart-wheel. Each little drawer was

labelled with the name of its owner, and had a lock and key. On the centre of this table stood a tall lamp; around it of an evening the lady and her daughters would gather to sew patchwork, embroider aprons, or knit. This table is still wheeled up in front of the ample fire-place, and the tall old grenadier of a lamp is still lighted, at night, but now a solitary girl sits at the table, plying her needle, or wielding her pen. Opening from this room toward the centre of the building is our dining-room, and behind that, the still-room. This room in all our old Virginia houses is as indispensable as pantry, or kitchen, and takes its name from being the place where all domestic perfumeries and essences are distilled; where cordials and the like are prepared, and preserves and jellies are put up. What his library is to the student, what her bower is to the bride, is this still-room to our housekeeper. Her sanctum-sanctorum, her heaven of heavens. Though pickling, preserving, and distilling days last only a few weeks in summer and fall, yet this room is never vacant. Every winter Mrs. Wimsat has two looms, a cotton and a woolen one; and two spinning wheels, a cotton and a woollen one, brought into this room, and set going under her own eyes. Here, of an evening, when the house servants have eaten their supper, she brings them and sets them to work, spinning and weaving the family cloth; and here she brings fifteen or twenty of the negro children to pick cotton, that is, to separate the cotton seed from the cotton wool. Though cotton is not named among the products of Virginia soil, yet here in the valley every thrifty housekeeper has her patch of cotton, yielding, with careful cultivation, enough for home consumption, and the children on the plantation pick it, and the house servants card, spin, and weave it. You should see Mrs. Wimsat, of evenings, sitting among her industrious handmaidens. They are spinning and weaving a nice blue and white carpet for my chamber now (*entre nous*, you shall have it, Juliette, for your room, when you come home; I love my mother's old brown carpet best, because it was hers.) They are also making some beautiful counterpanes to match the carpet, you shall have them all in your room. I should like to pass much of my time in this still-room if I might, for I love housekeeping, but Mrs. Wimsat will not permit it. For instance, after the preserving season was over, and they got

regularly to work of evenings with their looms, cards, and spinning-wheels, one night, as we all arose from tea, I followed Mrs. Wimsat into the room; but the women and girls all suspended their labour, and Mrs. Wimsat, observing me, gravely inquired whether I wished "to inspect their work." I smiled assent. After she had shown it all to me, she remained standing, as if in readiness to attend me from the room. I seated myself without an invitation, telling her that I preferred to pass the evening with her. She said nothing, and the people went on with their work: and the clatter of two looms, and the whir of the two spinning-wheels, prevented conversation. This happened to be Saturday evening, and so she suspended work at eight o'clock, and called up all the children to say their catechism. This is her custom every Saturday night. I thought she disapproved of my presence; nevertheless, I wished that she should get used to it in time, for I want to keep my own house, Juliette. However, some one else had an opinion about the propriety of my spending evenings in the still-room. Monday, as we arose from tea, I prepared to follow Mrs. Wimsat, but Colonel Dent, taking my hand, said, "The parlour is comfortably warmed and lighted, let me lead you thither, Miss Grey." I went (that was, last winter, and I have regularly repaired to the parlour every evening after tea, since then.) Certainly the old lady had given it a few extra touches, to make it inviting. Two tall prim wax candles were burning on the tall prim mantelpiece, and a roaring fire—a glorious hickory wood fire blazing on the hearth. You do not like a wood fire, Juliette? No, I really suppose you do not, because your tastes are so fashionable. No, the polished steel grate and anthracite coal fire for my elegant Juliette. But I like this ample hearth that seems to spread its wide arms out to embrace a whole clan. I love to hear the blazing fire of heavy logs, roaring up the chimney, and to see it lighting up the whole room, bringing out from the dusk the faces of the old men and women, whose portraits decorate the walls. Well, though this is the last of April, the evenings are quite chilly here, and the nights are quite cold, and from the low situation of the house, and the deep shadow of the mountain, it is quite damp, so that we still require a fire of an evening to make us comfortable.

APRIL 25.

I have had such a sweet day with my guardian to-day. He called me into his study immediately after breakfast. It was "upon business," but after that was over he began to talk to me of the responsibilities that were resting upon me; the responsibility of property, the claims of my people, and so on; he talked, and I listened and worked (I had some needle-work in my hand) until the dinner-bell rang. We dine at four. After dinner George brought the saddle-horses to the door, and was ready to attend me on my ride, when Colonel Dent sent him away, and took the other saddle himself. We had a long ride over the hills. As we mounted the hill and turned to look down into the valley, oh! Juliette, I thought surely Eden was not more beautiful. I have minutely described it once, I will not do it again. It is circular, and the tall hills that surround it throw one third of the vale in shadow all day: thus in the morning the shadow is thrown from the eastern hills, as the sun goes round the shadow is cast at noon from the southern hills, and in the afternoon from the western mountain. This heavy and moving shadow always rests upon the vale. Leelo-n-duskaro, "The Valley of Shadows" was the Indian name of this landscape gem.

"Hester," said my guardian, as we turned again to pursue our ride, "there is a singular chain of coincidence in the history of your family since they settled in Virginia. Did you ever hear the legend of Leelo-n duskaro?"

"Never," said I.

"No, I suppose not. I do not recollect it minutely: I fancy that Mrs. Wimsat could give you all the particulars, for she frequently alludes to it. Did you never, for instance, hear her ask, 'I wonder who will be the next master of the Vale?'"

"Yes," replied I, wondering, "I have heard her ask that."

"You are blushing, Hester; you thought, perchance, that it was a very natural question."

"Yes, sir, I thought so."

"That question, 'Who will be the next master of the Vale?' has been asked for the last hundred and fifty years." I looked up in surprise. He continued, "There has never been a male heir born to the Vale. The legend runs thus:

THE LEGEND OF LEELO-A-DUSKARO; OR, THE SQUAW'S CURSE.

"May the grass wither from thy feet! the woods
Deny thee shelter! earth a home! the dust
A grave! and heaven her God!"—BYRON.

"DUGALD CHANDOS, your ancestor, was a fierce partisan and persecutor in the reign of Cromwell. On the accession of Charles II. he was arrested—escaped—his estates were confiscated and himself outlawed—he fled to this country—wandered about awhile—got possession of a great deal of land, and was reputed wealthy. At that time this vale was an Indian village. The remnant of a small tribe of Wicomicoes here built their council-fires, and smoked their council-pipe around it. It was their favourite haunt at the close of the hunting season. They refused to leave it or to give it up, for any price. Dugald Chandos wished to purchase it; he wished to build a mansion-house upon it that should last his family for centuries. He selected this spot as the most sublime and beautiful in landscape, as well as the most delightful in climate, and fertile in soil, of all Virginia. He contemplated this idea, until it grew to be a monomania. He offered an immense sum for the vale. The sachem shook his head. At last his only son, Montrevor Chandos, who had been sent to England to receive his education, married, while there, the beautiful but penniless daughter of an English earl, the Lady Hester Dormer; and they were coming out the next year. And now the monomania of Dugald Chandos intensified into real insanity. It must have been so, else Dugald, a severe but just man, would never have burdened his soul with the crime that he soon afterward committed. He determined to gain possession of the vale at any price; of money or of conscience. Those were wild days, when there was little law or order in Virginia; and little or no protection extended to the savages. This was the remnant of a small and weak tribe of about fifty souls. Subtract from these the women, children, and old men, and there remained probably ten or twelve warriors. Dugald had the same sort of respect for these savages as he had for lions, bears, and tigers: and about as much conscientiousness in his dealings with the one as with the other. He came and lived among them; he had sojourned with them frequently before; he bargained with them for a large supply of fur, for which he agreed to pay a considerable

price; and announced his intention of remaining with them until the required amount was collected. They were on the very best possible terms; and Dugald Chandos must have possessed diabolical cunning to have so deceived them, to their destruction. The opportunity came. The whole tribe, men, women, and children, went down to the banks of the Shenandoah to fish. On the day of their expected return, he spread a feast for them, and laid a heavy train of gunpowder where they would sit. They returned in the dusk of the evening, delighted as children with the surprise that had been prepared for them; for there was plenty of 'fire-water' in the shape of brandy, whisky, and Jamaica spirits. They sat down to the feast, indulged immoderately in drink; and while they were revelling in their frantic orgies, Dugald slipped away unperceived, and fired his train. In a moment, as by the force of a rent planet, men, women, and children were hurled dismembered and burning to the sky; and a rain of blood, of flesh, of brains, and severed limbs and shattered trunks, darkened the air, and crimsoned the earth!"

I was pale, sick, and stunned with horror, Juliette! At last I faltered forth—

"And were they all destroyed?"

"All, Hester, were killed or mortally wounded. Not only so: this occurred in the winter, when the ground was hard, and the grass and brushwood dry and dead, and of course inflammable, and it took fire at the explosion. The flames spread, the forest caught, and a general and tremendous conflagration ensued. The Vale was burnt out, swept in a night, and a handful of charred and whitened bones was all that was left of the once powerful tribe of the Wicomicoes.* This, Hester, is history. Now for the legend; the fable—for I must consider it a fable, even in the face of the strangest coincidence I ever knew. It is this: that an old squaw, mortally wounded, 'bleeding at every vein,' with her garments blazing around her, sprang up in that scene of blood and flame, with the bound of a wild beast, planting her feet firmly upon the heap of the burning and dying, raising her wild face and sight-

* A fact. The name and locality are only changed. This piece of atrocious treachery occurred on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, and the descendants of the traitor are still living.

less eyes to Heaven, lifting her scorched and bloody arms on high, invoked the vengeance of God upon the destroyer. She cursed him first with the curse of blindness, that he who had burned out her eyes, might be blind for evermore, he and his children. She cursed him with the curse of the sonless: might he who had murdered her sons before her face, be sonless to the end of time, he and his children. She cursed him with the curse of the traitor: might treachery still pursue the traitor, him and his children. When they most fondly loved and trusted, might they still be most darkly betrayed, and, long as the shadow rested on the Vale, might the curse cleave to the traitor, to him and his children. Her garments were consumed, her limbs literally burning under her, as she said these words; she sank, and died."

I screamed, and was near falling from the saddle. I had been growing more and more nervous and excited as his story progressed, and at the close of it was quite hysterical. I could not suppress that scream. Colonel Dent was at my side in an instant, he caught my hand, and steadied me in my saddle, he did not attempt to support me, although I was near fainting. I looked in his face appealingly, imploringly, but his countenance was stern, as he said, "You want self-control, Miss Grey." I felt the tears welling up to my eyes, but I suppressed them; I saw plainly that he would approve no weakness. He fixed me firmly in my seat, and gave me the bridle. I recovered myself instantly, but said, apologetically—

"I am very nervous, Colonel Dent; I am also given to superstition; and that woman's curse seemed to fall upon me like an iron hand, implacable, stern, determined, pressing me even to the grave. I felt the horrid pressure, and I screamed."

"You want a strong *will*, Hester. You must exert your will. Your will is weak; and the will, like every other faculty of mind and body, can only be strengthened by exercise; exert your will in self-government, in the control of your emotions, in the government of your thoughts. It is a noble exercise; it will give you moral force—strength of will, without which the noblest attributes of intellect and affection still leave you at the mercy of every wind of doctrine and every wave of passion. Control yourself, Miss Grey, and let us hear no more of nerves."

Strange, unknown power, that transmutes everything he says and does, however stern and sharp, into a blessing and caress ere it reaches me. I was feeling very happy and was wondering at this, when he spoke to me again.

"What are you dreaming of now, Hester?"

I started, and felt the blood flushing my brow. He looked at me keenly, and said—

"Your thoughts have reverted to that foolish legend again; let me conclude that story, and have done with it. The tragedy of the Vale became known; the flames of the burning forest were even seen many miles distant; people flocked to the scene of death. It was supposed that the ignitable brushwood had taken fire while the savages were engaged in a drunken revel, and that their destruction had been accidental. Vague rumours of treachery got about, however, and the origin of the tragedy is now but too well ascertained. Dugald Chandos established a claim to the Vale by an alleged purchase; at all events he took possession of it, and erected the house we now live in. The burning out of the Vale left it in a state of unexampled fertility; and hence, Hester, the luxuriant productiveness of its soil. Dugald sent to England for furniture, and by the arrival of the young couple in the spring, everything was in readiness for their reception. The fruits of his crime seemed to be an unprecedented prosperity. But now, Hester, comes the singular coincidence that leads the vulgar and superstitious to give credence to the absurd story of 'The Squaw's Curse;' there has never been a male heir born in the Vale. For generations past the property has been called 'The Maiden's Dower.' 'Who will be the next master of the Vale?' has become a proverbial question. You inherit this property, not from a long line of fathers, but from a long line of mothers, Hester. The Lady Hester Chandos had seven daughters; all died unmarried except the youngest, who married a Graham, and from her the property has come down by a line of only daughters to yourself. Your great-great-grandmother, your great-grandmother, your grandmother, and your mother, were only daughters. It happened also

that your father was an only son, so that not a drop of your kindred blood runs in any living vein, Hester."

We had been making a circuit of the hills, and now our horses' heads were turned homeward. We rode along in silence a few minutes, then he inquired—

"What are you thinking of, Hester?"

"Dugald Chandos, did he escape?"

"Unscathed of God and uncursed of man? Apparently; yet he fell into a brooding, morose melancholy; would shut himself up in his chamber for weeks, especially when the anniversary of the tragedy brought it vividly to his mind; would break out into savage fury if disturbed by any of the family; finally, in three years from that day of fire and blood, he left the haunts of civilised life, wandered forth into the wilderness of Kentucky, and it was presumed that he lost his life among the savage hordes of that boundless forest. He was a man of strong will, and of great crimes. *Now* what are you dreaming of, Hester?"

"I was recollecting that you recommended to me the cultivation of a strong will."

"And thinking that I was wrong, inasmuch as a strong will sometimes leads to great crimes. Listen, Hester. Dugald Chandos' strong will was a despot, a tyrant, owning no authority. Let your will be strong; for, as I still say, without strength of will there is no moral security; let your will still be the executive of your moral government, but let it be a limited monarch, subject to the laws of the parliament of conscience. Well, Hester, do you understand this?"

"No, sir, not quite."

"You do not give me your attention, I think."

"I do, indeed; but—*conscience a parliament?*"

"Yes. Conscience is not a single attribute of the soul, although it may be considered one power, just as Congress is one power, but not one man. You never had a case laid before your conscience for decision, that was not argued *pro* and *con*, and reason, prudence, justice, expediency, prejudice, &c., each had a voice in the debate, and often conflicting voices, before the case was finally decided and

sent to the executive, the WILL, for approval or rejection; even then it may be lost; the will too often vetoes a case of conscience. Well, Hester, your mind is replying—give it words."

I felt unwilling still to answer him. It seemed presumption in me to differ from him, but he would draw me out.

"Come, Hester, what is it?"

"I cannot follow you in your figure, Colonel Dent; I have never had such a mental debate about right and wrong. When two opposite lines of conduct were before me, the right seemed *so* right, and the wrong so *very* wrong, that there was no chance for debate—conscience decided at once."

"There you are mistaken, Miss Grey; it was not conscience, but will that 'decided at once.' Your will only executed a law long before made by conscience; do you see the distinction?"

"Yes, sir."

"Yet you will never realise the difference until you grow older; until the trials and temptations of life are upon you. The government of your mind is sustained now by hereditary constitution, by old statute laws of education, by recognised common laws of conscience. No new exigency has yet arisen, no foreign invasion in the shape of *wrong*, no civil warfare in the form of PASSION has disturbed the peace, or threatened the overthrow of your moral government, demanding new, strong, prompt, and decisive action of conscience."

In conversation such as this we approached the house. The sun was low, behind the western mountain, that threw a deep, dark shadow over the house, and across two-thirds of the Vale; the shadow fell upon my face, and stole into my heart, and my guardian observed it, for he said—

"Come, rouse your will, Miss Grey; throw off the superstitious awe that is growing upon your spirit. You stand beneath the eye of God a frail and simple, but a guiltless girl. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited

upon the children to the third and fourth generation,' is not an edict, not a curse, but a prophecy—and if it were otherwise, the third and fourth generation since the crime is past."

He assisted me to alight from the saddle, and said, as he pressed my hand, "Let me see you at tea, Hester, with a cheerful countenance; never let me see you so weak and drivelling as to be oppressed with an idle legend."

He spoke in a tone of authority and of assured affection; every vestige of the shadow fled from my heart and brow before the light of his countenance, as I passed from his hand and went up the stairs. I changed my dress quickly and came down. Mrs. Wimsat had tea ready—such nice tea; and what do you think? early strawberries, raised in a hothouse; and rich cream; and such nice white spongy rolls. Mrs. Wimsat is great in housekeeping generally, but greatest in rolls. We found Marcus Derby there, too. Marcus makes this house his home most of the time.

Now I am going to tell you something that humiliated me a little, but all except the good effect is gone now. After tea Mrs. Wimsat, as usual, went into the still-room, Marcus walked out, and Colonel Dent went into the parlour. I ran upstairs to get my needlework, and as I came down, entered the parlour through the hall door. My guardian was sitting in a high-backed chair near the fire, and as I came in he held out his hand, and called me "Hester." I went to him, gave him my hand, sat down upon a low stool by his side, and looked up into his face to see what he had to tell or teach me. I forgot myself; he did not for an instant. Rising with a grave and stately courtesy peculiar to Colonel Dent, he placed me in the chair, and stood with an air of distant respect, while he spoke of some business matter left incomplete in the morning; and at the close of the conversation he bowed gravely, and left the room. The lesson pained me; but I have received it, I will profit by it; I will try not to be a child any longer. You see, Juliette, I have felt such a sense of protection, security, and confidence, in the presence of my guardian; I have felt so much as if I were his child; no, not exactly his child; I don't know what I

ım talking about I have lost my thought, bear with me; but I am happy The transmuting power that I told you of has laid a balm to my heart; I am happy in thinking how I shall let my guardian see that his lesson is not lost. I will "try to be a lady," as Mrs Wimsat sometimes ventures to suggest. If I could only look the queen that my splendid Juliette does! how they would approve me! * * * I cannot sleep, dearest Juliette; the full moon is shining brightly behind the mountain, and the shadow falls upon the Vale; falls upon the house, and enters my room, and enters my heart. I will banish the superstition; I will pray; I will not think of it; I will think of the dear little work I have cut out for myself to-morrow. It is this. This morning, when I was in Colonel Dent's study, I noticed its want of cleaning; the windows are fly-stained; the paint is yellow; the carpet looks as though it never *had* been shaken; and I think all last winter's cinders remain in the blackened hearth under the rusty grate. I spoke to Mrs. Wimsat about it. She says that "scholars" have a great horror of housemaids, and that Colonel Dent won't allow the room to be touched. I 'll see. To-morrow when he rides to town I will go in there alone, and I will so subtract, so evaporate the dirt, that nothing else shall be disturbed; so that my dear guardian shall feel the comfort of the change without scarcely knowing whence it comes

April 26.

I am just sending off this letter. My dear little job of work is done. I had a fine opportunity of seeing how my guardian liked it, for when he came home he immediately called me to go with him into his study, to see about paying off the farm labourers. I felt anxious and a little frightened. When he opened the door he looked annoyed; but upon seeing that nothing was disarranged, he took my hand, pressed it so genially, and said, "No one but my little ward could have done this;" then drew me to his bosom and kissed my brow, like an angel's blessing.

Good-by, dearest Juliette.

HESTER GREY.

May 7.

* * * Be sorry for me, Juliette. Oh! Juliette, be sorry for me; for my light, and warmth, and strength, are all withdrawn. My sky is full of tears, and I feel like the earth looks, on this cold, dark, rainy day; while the sun is hid. Colonel Dent has been much from home lately; and Marcus tells me that he is paying his addresses to a wealthy widow in Loudon County. Now this ought to be nothing to me. Yet, for more than a year, I have considered him as *my* guardian, *mine*, and nobody else's anything. The idea of his sustaining a nearer and dearer relation to another suffocates me. Marcus says that she is a beautiful woman, too; tall, and graceful. I wish Marcus had held his tongue. If there is anything I could hate in this world, it would be a chattering man.

May 8.

I had just written so far, dear Juliette, when I felt my head clasped by two large palms, and I knew that my guardian was behind me, reading what I had just written. I said nothing, for I was sinking with humiliation. Sitting down, and wheeling my chair around till I confronted him, he said, taking my hand,—

"And so you love me, Hester."

My face was burning, burning. I felt the blood, like a fire-bath, bathing my brow; I covered my face with both my hands.

"And so you love me, Hester," he repeated.

Oh! what must he think of me! I was growing sick.

"And so you really do love me, Hester."

He was sitting immediately in front of me—facing me—he took hold of my wrists, and removing my hands from my face pressed them together, and held them firmly between his own—looking steadily in my face all the time—my eyes were fixed upon the ground, but I felt his gaze in the depths of my soul.

"And Hester would give one of her little fingers to become Ernest Dent's wife."

I had no strength to reply, to escape, or even to look up.

"Hester Dent—what a pretty name!—don't you think so, Hester?"

I thought, I wished the earth would open and swallow me immediately. He continued:—

"Hester Dent. How many times have you stealthily written 'Hester Dent' upon little scraps of paper—and looking around in alarm, as if you had committed a crime, quickly destroyed it by tearing the paper into very small pieces, taking care, in your fond superstition, not to tear the 'Hester' and the 'Dent' apart; but to destroy the whole name together—say, Hester?"

He pressed my hands heartily as he spoke. Oh, heaven! here was a man whom I reverenced above all others, from whom I would have hid a weakness with jealous care until I could have corrected it; here was this man reading my foolish heart as he would read a scroll, divining my little furtive acts of absurdity by inspiration. Oh! dear me; yes, it was all over; his esteem for me was gone, could never be recovered; I had as well die; I was sinking with humiliation. He had ceased to speak; but there he sat, right before me, facing me, still holding my hands pressed together within his own, contemplating me at his leisure. I felt the blood receding from my limbs and curdling about my heart. I was cold, weak, sinking, and I wished to die; some moments passed, and then he said,—

"Hester, I like you; you suit me; and I sometimes think that if I do not secure you, some one else may come along and snatch you away; and that idea I cannot contemplate with calmness. Hester, will you be my wife?"

I felt as though an arrow, tipped with life, not death, had been sped through my heart. I was shocked, pained; and yet I knew that I should feel glad when that tremor were away.

"Say, Hester."

"Yes, I will."

"Indeed, Hester, are you in earnest?'

"Yes, indeed I am."

"Humph! what, Hester, after all your asseverations

that you would never marry, at least until you had freed all your people?"

"Yes; but I should have excepted you."

"And will you *accept* me, ha! Hester?"

"Yes, I tell you."

"But, Hester, recollect Mrs. Wimsat's caution. Are you not afraid—a little, weak, gentle creature as you are—to put yourself in the power of a great, strong man like me? How do you know but that I'll misuse you? Tell me that."

"How do I know? Why, I don't know at all. How do I know that my Heavenly Father will love, care for, and protect me so long as I live, or as long as I deserve it, but by faith? And it is by faith also that I feel I shall find protection, and not aggression, in your strength."

"God bless you, Hester!" said he, and drew me to his bosom.

Now, Juliette, this was a queer wooing, you'll admit; but what else could he say? He could not talk to me of diamond eyes and ruby lips. So I am happy again, Juliette. The sun was not extinguished, but had only gone behind the clouds a little while, and now it has come out brightly and warmly, and filled me with strength and joy. That Marcus! I'll take a revenge on him for plaguing me so much, by presenting him with Satin, the glossy black Arabian he admires so much.

The next day, after breakfast, we were standing at the parlour fire, waiting for the horses to be saddled and brought out for our morning ride; and Colonel Dent twined his arm around my waist, drew me under the shelter of his great chest and shoulder, and stooping down, stroked my hair with his other hand, and whispered—"May God bless my little bride! May God bless my good little Hester Dent."

I felt my ears burn again, as I asked him, "How did you find that out?"

"What, Hester?"

"Why that I wrote, that I scribbled ——"

"A name that you loved better than your own, all over sundry scraps of paper? Do you not know that what is

whispered in secret shall be proclaimed upon the house-tops?'"

"Yes, at the last day; but how did you know, Colonel Dent?"

"I will show you."—He took my hand, and leading me, passed the room and up the stairs into his study, and throwing open his writing desk, scattered some loose scraps of paper over the table, saying, "There, Hester! I simply judged you by myself, that 's all!"

I looked, and smiled to see my name, in all sorts of characters, from graceful Italian to grotesque old English, written all over the waste paper.

"Pretty folly of my age, Hester; and here is more of it. Do you remember the tiny black kid glove you lost four months ago?" and he took from his bosom the missing glove; "I found it on the hill where we had been riding, Hester, and have worn it ever since; but this is highly ridiculous! It was foolish in you, and contemptible in me—let us have no more of it;" and then he crumpled up the paper and the glove, and turning toward the grate, threw them into the fire "Now, Hester, I suppose you wonder—yet you would not ask me for the world—why I put the little glove to my bosom, when I might have put the owner there—ha, Hester? Well, you need not reply I saw that you loved me, it is true, there, don't look distressed—I am not going to tease and pain you any more, that was wrong also Well, I saw that you loved me, that, I take it, was quite inevitable, for, poor girl! you had no one else to love If it had not been me, it would probably have been the tax-gatherer or the postman; therefore, Hester, I wished to try you, to see whether your affection sprung from preference or necessity, and I brought Marcus Derby here I am satisfied now, Hester, my little dove-eyed darling. God bless you, Hester."

When he says, "God bless you, Hester," I feel profoundly blessed; the benediction diffuses itself through my whole being; I feel as the children must have felt when Christ laid his hands on them and blessed them He has a sweet, full, rich-toned voice, that seems to come from a great depth, and I pass from under the sound of it in a

state of delicious, dreamy, rapt awe. Listen! oh, Juliette. In the Catholic church marriage is held to be a sacrament, and the most impressive ceremonies of the church sanctify the union. Now, though I am not a Catholic, yet to me, also, is marriage a sacrament. Ay, I feel our betrothal to be sacred—my new position on holy ground—my home a temple of worship—almost heaven—my dear guardian something superhuman—something uniting me with God. An atmosphere of holy beauty surrounds and pervades my soul; a deep joy that must overflow in tears, and not in smiles, fills my heart. I am in closer communication with the good God. I feel His hands spread over me in benediction; His smile, or something emanating from His countenance, conveying more of earnest love and blessing than a smile, warming me into a higher, deeper, purer consciousness of life—of immortality. Why do I write to you so truly? It may be wrong; I fear it is wrong; but then I am *so* blessed, and how can I be churlish, and not tell you, my bosom friend, my chosen sister?

N.B. We have returned from our ride. We have been out among the orchards; such orchards—the pears and peaches won the medal at the Horticultural Exhibition last year. Colonel Dent says that this year the fruit will be still better—for that the season is later, the spring having approached slowly and steadily. Hazy (Ahasuerus, one of our coloured men) has just arrived with a cartload of fresh fish from the Shenandoah, so we shall have rock fish for dinner to-day, for the first time this spring. I wish Mrs. Wimsat would please to let me try my hand at making the sauce. I think she ought to now.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEDDING.

"You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am. . . .
An unlesson'd girl—unschool'd, unpractised:
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn: and happier than this,
She is not bred so dull, but she can learn;
Happiest of all, in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed—
As from her lord, her governor, her king,
Myself and what is mine, to you and yours
Is now converted; but now I was the lord
Of this fair mansion, master of the servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself
Are yours, my lord."—MERCHANT OF VENICE.

THE VALE, June 20.

I HAVE changed my name, dear Juliette, but have not found time to write to you since.

People who take the liberty of getting married in the country must submit to many inconveniences, imposed by custom, that you in town are happily delivered from. There is no getting the ceremony quietly performed in the morning, and slipping off to Baltimore or Boston to spend the honeymoon. No, indeed! An opportunity for festivity occurs so seldom in the country, that people *will* make the most of it. At first, I was astounded when Mrs. Wimsat told me that we should have to prepare for a large company; and further, that we should have to make ready rooms to accommodate for the night guests from a distance; that this was the custom, and it would give offence to waive it.

"It is very true, Hester," said Ernest, when I appealed to him, "a wedding in a country neighbourhood is a perfect jubilee; and, with your large house and large means, it

will be expected of you. You would disappoint three counties to omit it. And why not, Hester, give the young men and maidens a chance to make merry with music and dancing? We are not ascetics."

"Nor is that all, Miss Grey," said Mrs. Wimsat, when we were alone "If you don't want a fuss, you had better not get married at all, your wedding will only be 'the beginning of troubles;'" (now, Heaven forbid, thought I, with a painful cramp of the heart, although I understood her meaning;) "for every family of note whom you invite to your wedding will feel bound to give you a dinner and ball in return, which you cannot decently decline."

"Then how long is it likely to be, Mrs. Wimsat, after we are married, before I can settle down to the quiet enjoyment of my home?"

"Dear knows! When an heiress raises a disturbance in the neighbourhood by getting married, she can't expect it to subside all at once."

One thing that occurred about this time troubled me a little, but it is gone now. I went to Richmond (quite an event of itself in *my* quiet life, Juliette) to make purchases Among the splendid array of finery, jewellery, &c., I saw and admired a gentleman's elegant diamond breast-pin. I purchased it, and when I reached home, begged Ernest to accept it. He, however, declined it, saying that he disliked jewellery, except upon women, requested a kiss instead, and advised me to give the bauble to Marcus, who fancied such things.

Upon the day of my marriage, Marcus avowed that he couldn't and wouldn't stay to witness the ceremony—imperative business, &c. So, when he came up to my room to bid me good-by, I took the little brooch and stuck it in his shirt-bosom, and bid him wear it for my sake Whereupon he burst into a passionate fit of weeping.

"Why, Marcus! What in heaven's name! Why, Marcus—dear Marcus—what is the matter?"

"Matter! Don't ask me what is the matter, Miss Grey; that's adding insult to injury. Matter! Haven't I been reading with you, and walking and riding with you, and haven't I talked poetry and sentiment to you, and

didn't our mothers go to school together, and haven't I been looking forward to the honour and the bliss—Oh, Miss Grey, I didn't think you 'd have done so."

Juliette, I was totally unprepared for this. I resolved to expostulate with him.

"Why, Marcus, *I* would never suit you. A little, pale, ugly woman, such as I am, would never suit *you*. Colonel Dent——"

"Don't name him!" said Marcus, energetically.

"I will. Colonel Dent likes me because I am, as it were, his mental and spiritual child. I go heart and hand with him in all his aims and objects. But you, Marcus, a handsome and accomplished young man like you, should marry some pretty, lively girl, a year or so younger than yourself. A plain, grave woman, like I am, would never make you happy."

"Gammon, Miss Grey! and you know it is. I like ugly, plain people—that is to say, I like you; and just at this moment I hate pretty girls. All fudge, Miss Grey! You just want to marry that old codger because he is a colonel in the army, and he wants to marry you for your money—that is it! And so I 'm to be jilted; but no matter, Miss. In the next number of the 'Virginia Republican' you 'll see a paragraph headed 'Melancholy Suicide,' and you 'll see, you will, the name of the unfortunate Marcus Derby added to the thousands driven by the fickleness of woman to madness and self-murder."

Now, here was an accusation, and here was a threat. Nevertheless, I recollected my own despair when I thought Ernest was wooing the widow; and so, instead of laughing at him, I cried. He mistook my tears; for brightening up, he said, as if a new thought had struck him—

"See here, Hester. Dry up your tears. I see how it is. You thought, up to to day, that I would not have you, and now you know better. Well, Hester, if you do think me 'the handsome, accomplished young man' you said, why, it is not too late even now—cut the old codger! Tell him you won't have him; that you 've changed your mind, as you have a perfect right to do: or, say the word, and I 'll kick him out."

His face fell white all of a sudden. There stood Colonel Dent, and Heaven only knows how long he had been standing there.

"Get you gone, Marcus! You're a fool. What are you doing in Miss Grey's apartment, anyhow? Don't you expect me to break your head?"

Marcus "rushed" from the room in true dramatic style.

"Never mind him, Hester! He's sick now, very sick. This puppy-love is dreadful while it lasts; the best of it is, it don't last long. He'll be in better health next week."

"Do you speak from experience, Colonel Dent?"

"From experience of him I do. He's a very inflammable youth, Hester. He must be, or he would not have fallen in love with you, you know. He is but eighteen, and to my certain knowledge, he has been as sick as this *six* times, with the love of six different ladies."

The first part of his speech relieved me from uneasiness upon account of Marcus; the latter clause—time, place, and circumstances considered—dashed me a little.

"Am I so *very* unlovely then, Colonel Dent?"

"No. Oh, no, Hester. But you are not the girl to attract a young man's admiration. You are aware that I never flatter, Hester."

Yet I should like to have been flattered and petted a little just then. With his keen penetration, he must have perceived my foolish thought, for he answered it.

"This is childish and puerile, Hester, and unworthy of you and me. It springs from an incipient self-love and vanity that you must root out and cut off."

Now, this was worse than before. There was nothing good in me, within or without. I felt provoked to bid him go about his business, and marry a cast-iron woman, if it pleased him; but I looked up in his face—his unclouded, truthful, glorious face—the countenance of an archangel reproving folly—and my spirit fell at his feet again. I gave him both my hands and said—

"Yes; it *is* self-love and vanity, or may become so, and I *will* try to root it out if you will help me. Yes, I *have* desired that you (*only* you!) should find something to love

and esteem, and even admire in me. It *is* vain presumption to expect that *now*, but to merit it in the future shall be the goal of my highest ambition!"

"Your highest ambition! I will not have it so, Hester I will not occupy the seat of the Most High in your heart. All this that you will do and be for my sake, you must do and be for God's, or it will not please me."

Repulsed again. When shall I ever merit this lofty man's esteem? All my conceptions are too low, all my aspirations too short, to come up to his standard. Yet would I not have that standard lowered an inch. I will rather try to raise myself to its height. God help me! thought I

"Forgive me, Hester, if I have probed your heart deeply. I wish to show you its evil, that you may eradicate it. I would have you very free from faults, for you are very dear to me. Well, Hester, we must separate now, to meet again an hour hence, and then——"

Our eyes met an instant in an intense gaze; spirit mingled with spirit then and there! I know it; for a deep soul-thrilling joy electrified my heart, and I believe it was *my* fault that I was caught to his bosom an instant—and then Mrs. Wimsat came in, and, putting a note in his hand, and while he read it, said to me, in a low voice—

"The Judge and Mrs. and Miss Bland are below stairs, and Miss Gales and Miss Fanny are also here—is it not nearly time to receive your bridesmaids?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wimsat, bring Alice and Fanny up. Colonel Dent is just going."

"Has Mr. Derby left the house yet, Mrs. Wimsat, do you know?" inquired Ernest.

"No, sir; they are just saddling his horse."

"Then tell them to leave his horse alone, and tell Mr. Derby to attend me in my dressing-room. Woodbridge has disappointed me, Hester, so I shall have to press this young man into our service to lead Alice down;" and then he left the room, and Mrs. Wimsat followed him. And soon Alice and Fanny came rustling up in their white silks. How handsome and womanly they looked. They live so distant from me that I had not seen them

since we all left school. Alice is graver and more stately, Fanny wilder and more heedless than ever, now that the levelling and moderating influence of the boarding school is over. In an hour we were quite ready, and then Colonel Dent, attended by Marcus Derby and Judge Peter Church, came to the door to take us down. While we paused on the staircase until some guests who had just arrived entered the drawing-room, I felt my arm grasped tightly from behind, and Marcus, who stood with Alice behind me, put down his lips close to my ear, and said, in a thrilling whisper—

"Hester, I tremble for you. Hester, at this moment I am tempted to take you up bodily, and run off with you! He is not—this demigod of yours—what you take him to be. He is a cold, hard, black marble Colossus, whose altitude will intercept the dear sunlight of heaven itself from your life, and in whose damping shadow you will wilt and wither and die. Oh! Hester, pause. It is not too late yet. Make a scene, rather than make your misery. Create a nine days' wonder, rather than a nine years' torture. Oh! Hester, say the word, and I 'll kick up a row here directly."

"Marcus! child!" said I, "I *will* marry Ernest now! though he should eat me up next week—there!"

"Go to Old Nick, then, for a fool! *He'll* pay you for it—that 's a blessing, the self-righteous old Pharisee!"

And our little party moved on.

There was a very large company, and not one in twenty did I ever see before. Some half-dozen of the visitors remained over night; among them was a middle aged matron, a Mrs. Rumley, who was very affectionate to me.

"Your mother and myself were schoolmates and bosom friends, Mrs. Dent," said she. "We were married about the same time, and our intimacy was so close that, when we became mothers, we betrothed our babies—that is to say, yourself and a wild boy of mine, now at William and Mary."

This lady was the first to give us a dinner and ball, and then others followed suit; so that we were kept in a

continual round of visiting for three or four weeks. Of course, our bridesmaids and groomsmen remained with us, and attended us everywhere.

There was one little incident, I forgot to mention before, that affected me very much. On the morning after we were married I found upon my dressing-table a neat case, containing a beautiful pocket Bible, an elegant *bijou*, bound in blue velvet, and wrought with gold thread, and fastened with gold clasps. This tasteful and appropriate offering was accompanied by a rudely scrawled note, informing me that it was an expression of respect and affection from my coloured people, who hoped that when I read God's blessed word I would sometimes make use of that copy for their sakes. The sentiments were perfect, the writing and spelling nearly unintelligible. I felt the reproach, and determined to consult with my husband upon some plan by which the education of our people might be advanced.

Nearly every grown person on the plantation can read well and write a little—the result of Colonel Dent's own labour.

The last dinner and ball given us were at Judge Bland's. They reside twenty miles from here, over the mountains. We had to set out early in the morning, in order to reach Frostville in time to dress for dinner. We met very nearly the same company that we had been in for four weeks past. The ball was very dull, or I was very tired of the life—I don't know which. We remained over night, and returned next day, parting company with Alice, whom we left at her home.

Marcus Derby left us this very morning; so now we are at last alone. I am inclined to think that impressible young gentleman has lost his heart to Alice Bland. I am sorry for it. Alice receives his civil speeches with such serene, stately surprise, as if she wondered at him for a curious but harmless lunatic. He almost took my breath away by a caper he cut this morning, just before he left us. He came into my room to bid me good-by, and not seeing, or not caring to see Colonel Dent, he delivered himself in the following strain:—

"Good-by, Hester! Yes, I am going, Mrs. Dent. Yet, deeply injured as I have been, if ever you should need a friend call upon me. You have no father or brother, Hester! No, not even a mother to take your part, or a sister to quarrel for you. Nevertheless, Hester, bad as you have used me, if you ever should need a protector—if that old Jephtha should take it into his head to offer you a living sacrifice upon some altar of his fanaticism, call upon me, and I 'll shoot him! I will, if I 'm hung for it the next day; so help me——"

"Hold your tongue, Marcus! How dare you? You 're mad! I 'll give you a few hours to recover your senses, and if at the end of that time you don't ask Colonel Dent's pardon, I 'll never speak to you again. Leave the room," said I.

"Let him alone, Hester. If his cure were possible, I should undertake it myself. His attack must work itself off, and then he 'll feel thoroughly ashamed of himself. Leave him to the action of his own mind."

Before this speech was concluded Marcus had obeyed me, and left the room.

There is nothing small about Ernest Dent's character. His feelings and kind purposes toward Marcus Derby are entirely unaffected by his absurd behaviour.

Your letter has just been placed in my hands. You ask me what I "see to admire in Colonel Dent?" Dearest Juliette, you never did see him, or you would never think of asking such a silly question. Notwithstanding it is rather a saucy question to ask a wife, as you are my bosom friend I will try to answer it to your satisfaction. If I should describe him by one word, I should say I admire his *strength*—moral, intellectual, and physical. I like his unusual height, his proud head, broad shoulders, and deep chest; and the rich full voice that issues thence, like the deep tones of a church organ. When I stand by his side, my head scarcely reaching his shoulder, I love to feel myself sustained by a strong arm, powerful enough to protect and defend me, though the world fell in anarchy about us. Before I was married, even in this civilised country, and with a fortune at my command, I felt un-

settled, insecure, and homeless, like Noah's dove upon the waste of waters. I longed to fold my wings upon some broad bosom that would love and shelter me.

Now, I feel a delicious sense of protection, security, and repose.

I like his strength of intellect, that takes in the vast amphitheatre of subjects, and in this day of opposite and conflicting opinions, of violent controversy and stolid obstinacy, can afford me a calm, just, and dispassionate tribunal of appeal.

And I glory in his moral strength—that omnipotence of principle that would compel him to impale himself upon a point of duty, if required; that would hold fast his integrity though the heavens and the earth fell to dissolution around him. And what if his standard of excellence *is* high and difficult of attainment, as it is inevitable, from the character of the man, that it should be, I will strive to reach its altitude. Now, Juliette, I have admitted you into the inner sanctuary, the holy of holies of my soul, and given you her most precious secrets—receive the confidence as a sacred trust, and deposit it in the deep recesses of your own heart; neither let your tongue speak of it nor your judgment arraign it, for indeed I have a misgiving that it is a breach of faith to unveil my heart in this manner to any but my husband.

Now, as I have written you quite a long letter, I must bring it to a close. Write again soon, and don't forget to direct your letter to my new loved name—

HESTER GREY DENT.

A little drab coloured name, is not it?

CHAPTER V.

THE BEAUTIFUL SLAVE.

"Not one sigh shall tell my story,
Not one tear my cheek shall stain;
Silent grief shall be my glory—
Grief that stoops not to complain."—Mrs. Robinson.

October 1

We have had a delightful "Harvest Home," the more delightful that we hoped it would be the very last harvest gathered into barns by slave hands on our place; for we thought that my early marriage would accelerate the period of their freedom by three years. Colonel Dent went to Richmond immediately after the gathering in of the harvest, to examine the will of my father, recorded in the court-house there, preparatory to taking immediate steps to their manumission. He had another object in going, also—to purchase some of the elegant imported furniture, and a few of the fine stud of English horses from the estate of Rutland Reeves, Esq., lately deceased. Marcus Derby attended him thither with a waggon and one of the farm men, to assist in transporting his purchases.

Upon a lovely evening, about a week after Colonel Dent had left home, Mrs Wimsat came into my room, and said—

"They are returning, Mrs Dent. Do come out and see them. It is quite a cavalcade."

I went out. As they were winding down the hill into our valley farm I could see the whole party. Col. Dent was not there. In front rode Marcus on a magnificent horse—one of Colonel Dent's purchases, of course; by his side, upon an elegant black pony, sat a young girl, the most lovely little creature I ever saw; and behind them came a waggon, containing a huge box and a smaller one.

When they drew near the door Marcus alighted, and taking the bridle from the hand of the young girl, led her on her pony up in front of me, and stopped. And there they stood; the beautiful little girl, with her jetty curls, and dusky eyes drooped till the long black lashes rested on the dead white cheeks; and the pony, with its shining black coat, and its elegant limbs and head; a charming picture, rider and horse; and there stood Marcus at the pony's head, with a look of malignant satisfaction on his face.

"There, madam, here are the pony and the girl that Colonel Dent purchased at the sale, and has commissioned me to present to you."

"What, Marcus!" said I, in disgust at what I supposed to be his ill-timed jest. "Explain yourself."

"I know nothing about it. There is his letter. Some of Colonel Dent's beautiful consistency, I suppose."

Still utterly unenlightened, I welcomed the young girl, and, requesting Mrs. Wimsat to attend to her comfort, retired to read my husband's letter.

"There are a piano and harp in the waggon, purchased at the same time with the pony and the girl!" cried out Marcus, spitefully, as I went.

I requested him to have the boxes brought in, but not opened until my return; and, gaining the privacy of my own chamber, I broke the seal of my husband's letter. This letter explained to me, first, that he should be detained in Richmond a week or two longer, consulting with attorneys upon the subject of my father's will; for it appears that there is a clause in the will that presents an impediment to the immediate execution of our design of emancipation. In fact, the property is tied up in such a way, that he fears nothing can be done until I attain my majority. Then he told me of the pony—"A beautiful creature, Hester, as you will see," wrote he, "and gentle as a child. He was imported direct from England, and is from the stables of the late Duke of ——, so celebrated for his fine stud. (By the way, Hester, what an *excellence* for a peer of the realm to be 'celebrated' for.) I need scarcely say the pony is for your own use. I have also

sent down a harp and a fine German piano, with some of the church music of Haydn and Mozart. I shall look for a rich treat for our coming winter evenings."

Now, Juliette, I regretted neglecting my musical studies at school. How could I meet my husband's anticipations on this point? Or, what use could I make of the superb instruments, or the exalted compositions he had sent me? Or, how should my weak voice and weaker lungs sustain the harmony of those sublime strains of church music of which he is so passionately fond? Dear Juliette, do *you* perfect yourself in your musical studies, so that when you come home your fine voice and finished touch may supply my deficiency. I shall delight in hearing your rich voice mingle with Ernest's deep tones in some of those heaven-inspired strains of Mozart. That, indeed, will be a treat. To return to Colonel Dent's letter. In conclusion, he wrote—

"And now, Hester, I have deferred to the last any mention of Minny Dozier, the young girl whom I send to you in Marcus Derby's charge. I purchased her at the sale, with the purpose of saving her from the hands of a southern slave dealer, and from the shame of an exposure and sale in some southern mart, and from the horrors of a fate worse than slavery, and which her extreme personal beauty would seem to invite. She is but a child, Hester, only seventeen years old, and I think of very feeble intellect, and of very strong feelings, judging from her sudden attachment to myself (as her preserver), and from her great but suppressed emotion at leaving me. She will require a watchful surveillance for some years to come, and will need through life the restraining and governing influences of religious culture. Therefore receive her, and put her to some light service about yourself, or in your chamber; and when I return we will think upon some plan for the future."

Well, Juliette, having concluded my husband's letter, I felt very grateful to him for his compassion to the girl, and for his kindness toward myself. And I could not help pitying the poor girl thus consigned to me as a packet of goods. So I rang the bell and sent for her.

She came in noiselessly, and stood a few feet in advance of the door, so meekly! her eyes downcast, her little hands folded together, and a visible tremor vibrating through her frame.

"Come here, Minny; sit down upon this stool by me," said I; and she came.

"You have had a long, fatiguing journey. Are you very tired?"

"Yes, madam," she replied, in soft, round, full notes. Her voice was irresistibly charming. It won me.

"Then you shall have a cup of tea, and retire early, Minny," said I, touching the bell.

"Have you any relatives living, Minny?" said I. At that, without replying, she melted into such a sea of tears, that I immediately regretted having questioned her upon the subject. She soon recovered her composure, however, and drank the cup of tea that was brought her with tolerable cheerfulness. Then I sent her off to bed, and went downstairs to make acquaintance with my pony. I met Marcus on the central piazza.

"Well!" said he, "what do you think of your handmaiden? Fair to look upon, is she not? Colonel Dent thinks so, I know. Hagar, or Zilpah, or Bilhah, is her name?"

Not choosing to notice the covert meaning of his flippant speech, I replied—

"Her name is Minny Dozier, Marcus, and I like her very well."

"Oh! you do. Well, if you don't see anything amiss, I have no right to make a comment. When is the patriarch himself expected home?"

Fearing that his speech would become still more explicit and impertinent, and that I should be obliged to notice it, I called to a servant, and said—

"George! bring out Mr. Derby's horse!" and when he was gone I turned to Marcus, and said—

"Now, Marcus, I must wish you good-by. I shall be glad to receive you again when Colonel Dent returns."

"I'll be shot if I go any further to-night to please you, Hester. Tired as I am, and through these heavy

September dews, too. You want to give me the chills and fevers, I believe. Sink me if I stir from here to-night."

"Then, Marcus, you must consider the courtesy due from a man and a guest to a woman and his hostess."

"I will consider it—I mean, I wont consider it—that is to say, I sha'n't hush my tongue, and see you imposed upon! good little idiot as you are!"

"Marcus!" said I, "in the neighbourhood where you were brought up, is that the manner in which a young man speaks to a matron?"

A derisive laugh answered me.

"Oh! if you are satisfied about the girl——"

"Marcus!" interposed I, sternly as I could speak, "you have not found the philosopher's stone, it is true; you cannot convert base metals into gold; but you have discovered a devil's alchemy, by which you transmute the brightest, purest, and most beneficent motives, into the darkest, foulest, and most revolting. I cannot congratulate you upon your moral chemistry; I do not think it will benefit yourself or others." And I left him.

Marcus grieves and angers me. I cannot bear to see the pure motives and noble acts of my husband arraigned by one who should, in very gratitude, be among the first to bend the knee before such worth as Ernest Dent's But his impertinence no more disturbs Ernest than does the baying of a house dog at the moon the serenity of night's high and tranquil sovereign. . . . I am very much pleased with my little maid, Minny. She is gentle and docile, but not quick in intellect. The child delights what you term my artistic love of beauty. Her frame is slight, but rounded and graceful; her hands and feet beautifully delicate; her head small; her forehead low, but shaded with a quantity of shining purplish black hair; her complexion is of that opaque white usually seen in quadroons, and sets into stronger relief the straight black eyebrows and long black eyelashes; her eyes are large and soft, tender and still. I have never seen her eyes sparkle and her cheeks glow. Her manner is gentle, pensive, and quiet. She appears to have very little mind

but warm affections. Taken altogether, an unhappy organisation for a poor girl in her circumstances. . . . Colonel Dent has come home. It is as he feared. We cannot emancipate our people until my twenty-first birthday. Ernest will, however, turn his attention to educating them for freedom, thus occupying the next three years

CHAPTER VI

BLINDNESS—THE BABE.

"Oh! dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon;
Irrevocably dark, total eclipse,
Without all hope of day."—MILTON

JUNE 1, 18—

IT has been some time since I wrote to you, dear Juliette, yet I am certain that when you hear my apology you will say that it is as good as ever an unpunctual correspondent offered.

I wrote, about this time last year, that my heart was so full of peace and joy that it could hold no more in its mortal state. Yet, now, have I found room for the love of a sweet little girl—our Heavenly Father's latest, dearest boon to us. I have called this dear, curious, little miniature woman Juliette Summers; and I think her soft black eyes and fine hair, like black floss silk, resemble her more to Juliette than to Hester. I cannot fairly represent to you the mingled emotions of love, joy, gratitude, and wonder, with which I have received this last blessing from Heaven—yes, wonder; for though you will say babes are common things enough, yet *mine* seems something new and strange; and I sit by her cradle, watching her soft and regular breathings for hours, until I grow to think she is a miracle. Never did my soul so earnestly seek her Maker's presence, to pour out her gratitude at his feet, as now. These are my private emotions, dear Juliette, imparted

only to my bosom friend. To all others I appear matronly and indifferent enough, as if I had been used to babies all the days of my life, I daresay.

But, now, I will tell you why I have not written to you for so long; it was not the arrival of my little daughter—the blooming of that little May-flower could not have prevented me.

About three months since, it pleased Heaven to visit me with an affliction, and subject me to a trial, which is now mercifully ended. Colonel Dent was absent on an electioneering tour, and I had promised Marcus, who was on his good behaviour about that time, to go and spend a few days with Miss Hulda Gales, in order to give the said Marcus an opportunity of paying court to Miss Fanny, with whom he has become very much enamoured. I had given directions for a very early breakfast, and for the carriage to be at the gate at sunrise. It was natural that I should wake early the next morning; yet it seemed to me very long in growing light. I waited and waited for the dawn in vain. At last Minny came to my door and knocked, and I told her to come in.

"Breakfast is ready, ma'am, and the carriage is at the door. Mrs. Wimsat would not let me disturb you till now. She thought you were asleep Shall I light the fire?"

"No, Minny, not this morning, as I shall have to dress in haste. Open the blinds and draw back the curtains, Minny."

She did so, and brought me my dressing-gown.

"Ah, Minny, you will have to light a candle; it is too dark to see to dress without one."

"Lord bless your soul! no it ain't, ma'am The sun is blinding; it flashes on the snow so, I even thought it would be too bright for you, ma'am."

Then the truth rolled on my soul, and overwhelmed me: I was *blind*, Juliette. I sunk back upon my pillow, and in an instant all *this* poured through my mind—the hereditary, but irregularly appearing, calamity of my family—*sudden blindness*, from the paralysis of the optic nerve. I recollected hearing that my great-grandfather,

on the very day after his wedding, while crossing the river alone in a boat with his bride, was suddenly stricken with blindness. I recollected that my mother, immediately after my birth, suddenly lost her eyesight; and during the six weeks that she survived, never beheld the face of her child.

No language can describe the anguish of my soul at that moment, Juliette. It was not that I was shut out from the blessed light of heaven for ever; not that I should never commune again, through books, with the glorious souls of the olden time, or the spirit-stirring thoughts of modern minds; not that I should never be blessed in contemplating the face of my babe; nor that I should never again know the heart-thrilling joy of sometimes meeting the glance of Ernest's soul-lit eyes—though all these passed through my brain, and burned it as they went. It was a pain more exquisite than any of the rest. It was the thought that I should never be useful or agreeable to Ernest again; that the blessed privilege of making his happiness was taken from me; that I should become a burden, an incubus upon him—a stumbling-block in his way—a gloom and a shadow in his home; that, in the long years we should live, he *must* grow weary of me. Oh, God! what a rebel I was then, as, heedless of the near prospect of becoming a mother, I gasped out, in words thrown up by the convulsions of my soul, a prayer to be removed from life then and there!

All this passed through my mind in the few minutes during which Minny was arranging the washstand; then I heard her come to the bedside, and lay down my slippers, and stand.

I felt the strong necessity of being alone, to wrestle with this great sorrow; so I said—

"I shall not rise yet, Minny. Tell Mr. Derby that I am not well enough to go downstairs to-day, so that our visit must be deferred. Place the little hand-bell within my reach, Minny, and leave me. Tell Mrs. Wimsat that I do not wish to be disturbed until I ring."

"Sha'n't I bring you up a cup of coffee, ma'am?"

"Not until I ring, Minny. Go."

As soon as she was gone I slipped out of bed, and groping my way to the door, bolted it. I dreaded interruption, until I should have attained some degree of self command. I groped my way around the foot of the bed and by the dressing-table, until I found the window, threw it up, and stretched out my hands. Oh! yes, the sun was there. I *felt* the genial glow upon my face, bosom, and arms, while to my eyes all was black, opaque darkness. I rubbed my eyes, and strained them toward the sun, with the faint hope that the light would stimulate the torpid nerve. It warmed the edges of my eyelids, and that was all. I felt my way to the basin of water, bathed them, and turned toward where I *felt* the sun to be again; it was warm, but black as before. I groped after and found a bottle of hartshorn, unstopped and inhaled it, hoping that it might reach and excite the optic nerve, *how* I did not think. Then I shut my eyes tight, and opened and stretched them; black—still black. Oh! it was of no use; I knew it was not when I tried So I crept back to bed; and as I lay there how the thick, black, heavy darkness surrounded and pressed upon me, as though it would encompass and press me to death! I could not breathe under it, so I gasped out to Heaven to have mercy on me! And then I wanted Ernest so much; I wished to fly from my calamity, and find shelter on his bosom; but the thought that I could never be to him all I had been, rose up dark and threatening before me, and then I wept, and writhed, and groaned, until I exhausted the force of my suffering, and lay in "the collapse of weakness." And it was then that the light of heaven's own truth dawned on my mind, and it was given me to interpret my trial aright. A spirit seemed to pass before me as I lay there in darkness, and whisper, "The probing knife of God's providence has entered your soul; where do you feel its point most keenly? for there, wherever that is, lies the diseased spot;" and I was constrained to reply—

"Oh! in my love for my husband; I shall never again be his right eye, his right hand, eager to divine his wishes, swift to execute his will."

"Even there lies your sin: you have set him before

God in your heart; and whenever he would repulse your man-worship, and points you to a higher object, your spirit bends the lower to him upon that account. Nothing but fire from heaven descending upon your head can make you look up. Consider the blessings wherewith God has blessed and is preparing to bless you. Think that, contrary to all your hopes and expectations, you have enjoyed as a wife, and will enjoy as a mother, all the sweet home affections. Think that you have forgotten the Creator, who brought you into life from nothing; the Father, whose thought for your good never slumbers nor sleeps; the Judge, who will require at your hands a strict account of the blessings you have misused; and acknowledge, in penitence and meekness, the justice of his chastening. Remember, too, that it is a Father's rod, and not a despot's sceptre, you are required to kiss. He would draw you to the contemplation of the forgotten purer life and higher worship required of your spirit."

I was softened, and I wept, Juliette, as I remembered that "the Lord loveth whom he chasteneth," and thought how I had slighted the Lord who loved me, and I prayed, and was composed. I then thought of God's infinite power; infinite to restore as to bereave, and my hope grew strong, that if I received this dispensation of my Father in a filial spirit, the calamity that had so suddenly fallen upon me would, in God's good time, when it had accomplished its mission, be removed. I was at peace. And as I heard the clock strike twelve, I put out my hand, and groped for the bell—found and rung it. Minny came scampering upstairs, glad to be admitted, followed more leisurely by Mrs. Wimsat, and last of all by Marcus, who would come in, he said, to see what had "given Hester the hypo."

I explained to them my misfortune, reminding them at the same time that it was an hereditary infirmity. Mrs. Wimsat was dumb with dismay, but soon hurried out to summon medical assistance. I heard Minny's low weeping, and held out my hand toward the affectionate girl. She seized it, and I drew her down till her soft curls touched my cheek: that overcame the little firmness she had, and

she broke into a convulsive fit of sobbing. Marcus must have thought me deaf as well as blind, for I *felt* him grasp Minny's arm, and shake her, and heard him exclaim, in a hoarse whisper—

"You abominable little thing! stop your bawling, will you? Don't you see that your mistress has enough to bear without your noise? Hush up in one minute, now, or I'll pitch you, neck and heels, out of the window! I will, so help me George."

Minny swallowed, choked, and gasped desperately, and at last succeeded in strangling her emotion. Soon after I sent Marcus away, and arose, and for the first time within my recollection was dressed by other hands than my own, and seated in a chair, to await the arrival of the physician. He came late in the evening, but, after examining my eyes, could do nothing for them. He confirmed my own secretly cherished hopes, however, by saying that some sudden shock of the nervous system, or some constitutional revolution, would be likely to restore my lost vision And he left me

Marcus rapped for admission early the next morning, and coming in, all great-coated and booted, said—

"I am about to go in pursuit of Colonel Dent, Hester I wrote to him this morning, but I have suppressed the letter, as it is uncertain where it would find him, and decided to go in search of him myself What shall I say to him from you?"

"Sit down, Marcus I am glad that you did suppress that letter. You must not go after Colonel Dent, either. You would seriously interrupt his business. He will hear of his misfortune soon enough, Marcus, two weeks hence, when the regular period of my writing comes. The last use I made of my eyes was to write to him night before last; that letter has gone, and he will not expect to hear again for a fortnight. Give him a fortnight's reprieve, Marcus."

"Well, then, Hester, what the deuce can I do for you? Shall I go and get a book out of the library and read to you? What will you have? the Spectator?"

"Thank you, dear Marcus; but I think nothing but the

Scriptures will do me any good just now. You may, if you please, take that little Bible off the dressing-table, and read the sixth psalm."

Marcus did as I requested, and after awhile, looking out, said—

"The weather is beautiful, Hester! Why do you box yourself up in this room so? Let me go and saddle your pony, and place you upon him, and take you to the hills; *do* now."

I accepted his kind offer, and after that day joined the family in the parlour, and went out as usual, Marcus and Minny alternately furnishing me with eyes. Still there were many lonely and unoccupied hours, when I was forced to deep thought. I looked forward with longing for, yet with a nervous dread of, Colonel Dent's return, and was more relieved than disappointed when I received a letter from him, mailed at Norfolk, telling me that business called him suddenly to Boston, where he should be compelled to remain some weeks. It was under these circumstances, and during his absence, that I one night received a new gift from heaven, in the form of a lovely little girl. My attendants had not taken the usual precaution of closing blinds, drawing curtains, and shading lights, for I had no sight to be injured. Judging by the lapse of time, I thought it was near day when I awoke out of my first sleep after the birth of my infant. Some one has said, "How dreadful is the first awaking after a great sorrow!" True; but then, how exquisite is the first awakening after a great joy! I awoke to a joy that I could scarcely believe in until I had felt about, and found my little child, to assure myself that it was no dream. Yes, there she was indeed—the dear, wonderful little creature—it was no dream, and neither had she been spirited away while I slept; my hand was on her soft cheek, as she lay in her crib by my couch. I was almost afraid to touch her, so I drew my hand away. As I raised my head, two oblong squares of dim light appeared where the windows should be! A hope, like a sharp pain, so mixed with intense desire and fear was it, darted into my heart. I placed my hands over my eyes, and then opened them again; there

were the dim lights still. Oh, that I might not be mocked with an optical illusion!

"Minny! Minny!" cried I, "get up; get up; light a candle quickly. I can see—I hope—I think—I can see!"

Quick as thought, the faithful little girl jumped up, and struck a light. It flashed into my eyes, and through my brain, like red-hot daggers. "'Twas confirmation strong as proof from Holy Writ."

"But oh, dear, dear!" thought I, covering my aching eyes, "my haste may have destroyed my vision again."

"Minny, carry the candle behind the curtains, and presently I will try if I can see it through the curtain."

She did so; and after my eyes were done burning and smarting, I uncovered them, and looked again. Yes! there was a transparent red spot glowing through the curtain—it was the candle behind it; and its rays were caught up and reflected all about the room—by the tops of the candlesticks on the mantel-piece, by the points of a cut-glass pitcher on the stand, by the face of the mirror, and even the brass rings of the bed-curtains. Yes, thank God! Oh! thank God! my sight was restored. Oh, joy! My soul felt as though it must break through my heart, and go and seek the All-Merciful, to lave his footstool with her overflowing gratitude, before I could even look upon my babe.

"Now, Minny, take my babe up very softly, and lay her before me."

She did so, and I looked for the first time upon the face of my first-born.

"You may put out the light now, Minny; day is dawning. Lie down until the family are astir." Indeed, I wanted to contemplate the dear, curious little thing before me, without the inquisitive eyes of another being fixed upon us.

. . . Day was growing lighter and brighter, and I saw the crimson flush of the rising sun above the distant blue hills. "Oh, vision! unparalleled blessing!" exclaimed I, as I turned my eyes from the view of the glorious morning landscape to the contemplation of my babe's sweet face. "When I forget thy mercies, Oh, my Father, may all I love cease to love me!"

Just then the door opened, and Mrs. Wimsat came in.

"Is there anything the matter with the babe? Why didn't you have me called up?" asked she, noticing my occupation.

"Nothing. I am only looking at her, Mrs. Wimsat. I can see now."

"Indeed! Really! Oh, I 'm so thankful. Are you sure? Let me look at your eyes. Yes, indeed, so you can! Oh, I 'm so thankful Colonel Dent is come."

"Colonel Dent come! Oh, why didn't you tell me so before? Where is he? Why don't he come up? When did he come? Do go and fetch him," exclaimed I, much excited in my turn.

"He came last night after twelve. You had just fallen asleep, and he would not suffer you to be disturbed."

"Did you show him the baby? Is he up yet? Oh, do go for him!"

"My dear Mrs. Dent, don't agitate yourself so. No, we didn't show him the baby. Men never go distracted about babies, particularly girls. He is up now, though, and sent me to see if you were awake."

"Tell him yes. Oh, go and bring him up, Mrs Wimsat, do." And she went.

"Men don't like girls." It was ill-natured in her to say that, thought I, sobered a little.

In the next moment Ernest entered. I raised myself up to receive him, but, overpowered by the rapidly succeeding emotions of the last few hours, I grew very faint, and sunk upon his bosom. He held me there some moments, and then his sweet deep tones gently broke the silence. "And so you have been blind, my poor dear little wife. You have been dark and desolate, and wouldn't let me know it. Why didn't you send for me? No one has served you so well or so willingly as I would have done. Why didn't you send for me?"

"I couldn't bear to make you miserable, or to take you from your business."

"No dispensation of Providence can make me miserable, dear wife; and as for business, I would have left the field

at the very crisis of the election strife, to have come to your side."

I could not talk much, I was so exhausted; but I pressed and kissed his hands.

"Mrs. Wimsat tells me that Minny and Marcus have been very attentive to you. I shall never think that I can too well repay them. Nevertheless, dear Hester, it should not have been their voices that read to you, or their hands that guided your pony over the hills, but mine. Now show me our babe, dear wife."

I tremblingly raised the babe, and placed her in her father's arms. He held her in his arms in silence a moment, and I knew he was returning thanks to Almighty God.

"Mrs. Wimsat says that men don't like girls, Ernest."

"Mrs. Wimsat is mistaken, I think. I am very grateful for this sweet little girl, dear wife, and shall love her better than anything else on earth, except her mother."

"Ah! but if she should ever be afflicted with blindness!" said I, the fear for the first time coming upon me.

"It is not at all likely. I think that *that* hereditary affection is nearly worn out, from what I have heard. Nevertheless, Hester, you should have told me of this hereditary infirmity before we were married. I feel constrained to say that your concealment of that fact seems to have been disingenuous, and I would find in you perfect truthfulness," said he, very seriously.

"Indeed, indeed, I had totally forgotten it. In the school where I passed nearly all my life the circumstance was not known, or, if possibly known, was never mentioned, so there was nothing to keep in my mind a fact casually made known to me in my infancy; and I should most probably never have recalled the circumstance, had not the calamity overtaken myself. Indeed, indeed, I would never deceive you, Ernest; and your rebuking glance cuts my heart in twain."

"There is no occasion, dear Hester; I believe you. You are too sensitive. A few minutes ago you were completely overcome with joy. Now, for a very insufficient reason,

you are distressed. You must try to regulate your feelings, Hester."

Now I knew and felt the truth of what he said, and could not say a word in defence. When shall I ever cease to be a child? I, who am already nineteen years old!

DEAREST JULIETTE JULY 15.

This letter will be handed you by Colonel Dent, whom I present to your acquaintance. In your last letter you expressed a painful doubt as to your presence here being as welcome to Colonel Dent as to your friend; a fear of his austerity, &c. I feel sure, love, that every doubt and fear will be dissipated during your first interview with him. You will please find inclosed here one hundred and fifty dollars. As your school duties close upon the twenty-fifth instant, and as Colonel Dent will be detained in town by business for the first two weeks in next month, you will have ample time to make your purchases, and prepare your wardrobe for your journey. I must commission you, also, to purchase a little wicker carriage for my baby. Please select it with care, seeing that the wheels are heavy and wide apart, and the seats are secure. Have the bill sent to Colonel Dent, who will pay it, and attend to the transportation. My little Juliette, now two months old, is growing finely. Minny Dozier is very fond of her—too fond. I have a nervous dread that she will squeeze the little one to death, as a child does a pet kitten. I have said that Minny's large dark eyes were sad, tender, and still, and that her cheeks were cold and white—and that light never came to the one, or colour to the other. Now, however, when she takes up the babe, her eyes, cheeks, and lips, glow. She has ardent affections, poor child! Pray God to shield her! Minny surprised me by the possession of a new talent the other day. I was in the parlour, seated at the piano, trying my poor best to learn a piece of music which Colonel Dent admires. When Minny brought little Juliette in, I arose and took the babe, and sat down in a rocking-chair. Minny was left standing by the piano, and inadvertently ran her fingers over the keys, then started, and turned her eyes, dilated with fear, upon me,

evidently thinking that she had taken an offensive liberty.

"Can you play, Minny?" said I.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And sing?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Sit down, then, Minny, and play this piece for me," said I, handing her the music I had been practising.

She obeyed very quietly—commenced and played the prelude in a style I have never heard equalled, even by professors. Then her voice rose, low, sweet, and clear, and filling with volume as it soared, like a bird that flutters out of its nest, floats away upon the atmosphere, quivering, pauses, and broods an instant in mid air, then soars to heaven. I never heard anything like it. The notes did not seem to issue from any place, but every particle of the atmosphere seemed to give out melody, as if the air had suddenly become sentient and vocal. I was entranced, spell-bound, even after the last notes had floated away, and until she arose to steal from the room. I recalled her.

"Who taught you to sing and play, music—I mean, Minny?" (I actually made that mistake, Juliette.) She did not reply. I repeated the question. She attempted to speak—her bosom heaved—her eyes overflowed, and she leaned over the back of my chair in a sea of tears. And since then she has been so sad—so sensitive! Even her fondness for my baby has taken a sorrowful, passionate earnestness quite inexplicable. When you come I shall transfer her to you for a dressing-maid. Perhaps in the service of a young lady she will be more cheerful than with such a sobersides as myself. Now, dear Juliette, as it is late, and I shall have to rise early to see Ernest off, I must bid you good night. I inclose a list of articles I wish you to get for us, and, of course, hand the bill to Ernest.

Ever yours,

H. G. D.

JULY 17.

A disappointment, Juliette. A rainy day. One of the rainiest days I think I ever saw, pouring, driven in sheets

against the windows, the cataract and our valley stream swollen to a flood, and roaring like an advancing sea. Colonel Dent thinks that the embankment of the canal must certainly give way, and that even the turnpike will be impassable by carriages for several days. A regular Noah's flood. You should have heard Marcus describing it,—

"As if the vast and sheeted sky
In thunder fell from heaven!"

The dairy and the spring-house were overflowed. Oh! what a fall is there from the sublime to the insignificant. I miss Mrs. Wimsat, who has gone on a visit. I had to go with the girls down to the spring-house, and oversee their taking the butter jars and cream jugs out of the water, and placing them on upper shelves. The worst of these girls is, that they do everything so stupidly. I stood there ankle-deep in water, though on the top step. Presently Ernest, dear Ernest, missed and followed me. Coming up behind me, and seeing my position, without one word he stooped and took me up bodily, and carried me through pouring rain, muddy walks, and running water, into the house. His cool promptitude was so droll I couldn't help laughing while I clung to him as we went along. He never even smiled.

"It is no laughing matter, Hester," said he.

"Why, I never was treated so like a bundle of clothes in my life," said I.

"I never in my life saw any one who stood more in need of a mother to take care of her than you do, Hester," he replied.

Then he hurried me off to change my shoes and stockings. I have taken cold—I am so hoarse they can scarcely hear me speak.

JULY 20.

Well, Juliette, I have been confined to my bed two or three days since the flood. The roads are in such a dreadful condition that Colonel Dent does not think of setting out before next week. Minny Dozier troubles me. Her cheek wears the white livery of death. She never speaks

except when spoken to; she never, never smiles. She never starts into life except to wait on Ernest, to do something for me, or to nurse my baby. She has some deep sorrow, some incurable regret. To-day, when I went into the parlour for the first time for three days, I found her weeping bitterly over my baby—she did not see me. I watched her. I have seen emotion before; but I never saw love and grief like that. She would strain the babe passionately to her breast, suck all its breath in a devouring kiss, while her bosom would heave like the sea in a tempest, and her tears would fall like rain. Sighs and sobs that seemed to burst her heart in their passage broke from her lips. I retired; I would not interrupt her then. I know how tears and sobs relieve an overcharged heart. (Though the only grief I ever knew was when I thought Ernest was going to marry the widow.) I would not even take the babe from her then; I saw she needed it. But this afternoon, if I am spared, I will have a talk with Minny. This sorrow, whatever it is, must not be suffered to rankle in her heart. I must draw the arrow out as gently as I can.

NIGHT.

Juliette! I sit down to this writing to-night, feeling cast down, half stupefied, feeling as though I had no right to enjoy any blessing I possess. There! I must stop and give nature way—*I must weep!* I have just left the presence of a great sorrow. There is no grief like unto her grief. And such patience, such "matchless constancy" as I have seen in this unschooled girl. Juliette! the lightest of her griefs would have struck me down into my grave. Let me see if I can tell you. Soon after dinner was over I retired to my own room. Minny got the babe to sleep by walking about with her in the garden. Then she brought her up to my room to lay her in her crib. She did so very tenderly, touched the rocker with her foot until she had settled her into a deep sleep, and then she turned to leave the room. I recalled her.

"Where are you going, Minny?"

"Into the laundry to plait Colonel Dent's shirt bosoms."

(She always prefers to do that herself; she does it beautifully.)

"Never mind that now, Minny; I want to talk to you. Come here, Minny, and sit down on this lounge by me."

She did so timidly, hesitatingly.

"Now lay your poor stricken young head down upon my bosom, Minny, and tell me what ails you; nay, do so, child. Look at my eyes Minny; they are red with weeping, and their tears have fallen for you—only for you. I saw you convulsed with sorrow in the parlour, I saw you kiss the breath away from my babe, and press her nearly to death in your strong agony of love and grief. Now, why did you do that, child?"

Her bosom began to rise and fall rapidly. She panted, choked; at last she could restrain herself no longer. She burst into a passionate fit of weeping and sobbing, gasping out at intervals,—

"Forgive—pardon me! I cannot help it now I must—must cry!"

"Then weep, poor child, as much as you please, but weep on my bosom;" and I passed my arm around her, and drew her head down on my breast. I looked at her pale young brow, and felt as though my heart must break to see her, youthful, beautiful, in bondage, severed from all her relations, without one friend on earth to soothe her. I wished her to cry a great deal. I thought it would do her good. So I stooped, and whispered,—

"Is it your mother you weep for, Minny?"

"Oh, no; she went to heaven almost before I was old enough to remember her," sobbed she.

"Your father?"

"He is sleeping in his grave I do not weep that he rests."

"Have you brothers or sisters, child?"

"I never had either, madam."

She had wept and sobbed herself quiet. She withdrew herself from my arms, and said, very calmly,—

"Lady—I am a wife and a mother; or, at least, I was both a year ago."

"My God!"

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, S. C. 29208
McKISSICK MEMORIAL LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
COLUMBIA, S. C.

I could say no more. I was struck stupid—stunned—half dead. She went quietly, and touched the bell rope. Harriet entered, and she requested her to bring water. She took it from her hand at the door, brought me a glass, and said,—

"Drink, Mrs. Dent. I do not wish to grieve you with my griefs. I do not suffer so much as you think. I am in a stupor most of the time, and only when a smile or a motion of your baby brings back strongly the image of mine, I weep, and sometimes rave; but that does me good; it passes away, and I grow calm, and remember that there is a God above and a heaven ahead."

"But, Minny! Oh, merciful Father in heaven! Where is your husband, and where your child?"

"I do not know, madam. I would to God I did."

"But when and where did you see them last, and what in the name of heaven severed you from them?"

"Mrs. Dent! Dear lady! you are shaken to death nearly by what I have told you; do not insist on my telling you more. Besides, in my story the honour of another is concerned."

"The honour of another!"

I looked at the poor girl—God forgive me—with a moment of suspicion. It was, however, gone in an instant, as I saw and remembered that the impress of deep grief upon her was in the full and sadly closed lips, and the drooping eyelids; and in the gentle, quiet languor of her form and motions, and that no shade like remorse rested on her brow.

"You must tell me all, Minny, my poor, poor girl—all. You must let me draw every shaft from your bosom before I can dress the wounds to advantage, or they can be healed. Never mind my nerves, Minny. There can be nothing behind worse, or as bad as you have already told me."

"Madam, there is"

"Tell me all, child; if you can bear to speak of it I can bear to hear it. Besides, Minny, if your husband and child are on earth they shall be found, and you shall be restored to them, if it takes half—yes, if it takes the whole of our property; for Ernest will be as much interested

as I am about this. Now sit down by me, and begin, Minny."

She took her seat on the lounge beside me, I held her hand while she narrated the following story.

CHAPTER VII.

ERMINIE DOZIER'S STORY.

"Wait, till like me your hopes are blighted;
Sorrow and shame are handmaids of your cable;
Famine and poverty your guests at table;
Despair your bedfellow—then rise—but not
From sleep—and judge."—BYRON.

My father's name was Alphonse Dozier. He was a French West Indian sugar planter. His plantation was situated on the Gulf of Mexico, and about a mile south of the city of Havana. It was called The Dell. He had a large number of slaves in the field, but one in his house—a quadroon—my poor mother. I have the faintest possible recollection of her cold white cheeks and tearful eyes, and of her shrinking evasion and avoidance of my father. Often when she would hear his voice and step approaching, she would snatch me up in her arms and hurry away to another room, and I would be frightened to feel her heart wildly throbbing against my own. Now, lady, I see by your face that you are mistaken. It was not his tyranny of anger, but of love, that she shrunk from. She was not his wife, not his willing mistress, but his slave. Oh, Mary, mother! what have I said? Lady, you should not have asked me for this story. My father was not unkind to her—in any other way than in retaining her, a beloved, but an unwilling companion. He would not have oppressed a dog even. He was the very picture of warm, genial, cheerful benevolence. I am sure he never understood that he was killing my poor mother. She died

Her wild, rebellious heart throbbed itself to death at last, and he wept like a chastised child when she died. He took me at once to his bosom. He would not let me sleep at night for embracing and weeping over me. This will show you further into my father's character; his love was ever stone blind to the good of its object, not from hardness, but from thoughtlessness. I had no female nurse at all; he said he could not bear the sight of a petticoat about the house after my mother's death. I slept with my father at night, and in the morning, when he went to the fields or to the chase, he would make a big negro man take me up in his arms, and bring me after him. And thus from field to field I have been carried, and set down in the shade of a tree while he rode around To amuse myself I began to mock the birds singing, and by and by they began to know me and answer me: indeed, they did, lady: and then the fact did not surprise me as the recollection of it does now. One morning Juba, my black nurse, carried me out into the forest after my father, who preceded us with his gun and game bag. He set me down in a deep dell, where violets and wild roses grew, and, giving me a handful of bonbons, bade me stay there till he went to my father I began to sing the notes of the thrush, and when I stopped my song was answered from the top of the tree overhead. I listened delighted, and when the thrush paused I took up the notes, and as soon as I stopped she commenced again; and thus we kept up a duet. You think this strange; you think that a man can better teach a parrot to talk than a bird teach an infant to sing. There was another bird which taught me to sing a sweeter song, though a sadder one—the nightingale. This was the way of it. My mother's grave was in the greenest, freshest nook of the forest dell: no tombstone marked its site, for my father said he could not bear to put a weight upon her poor chest. He used to take me there every evening, and, pointing down, would tell me that his heart was buried *there*, and weep. He was a large, fleshy, gentle-looking man, with a clear merry blue eye; and until my mother died was so given to mirth that I have seen him laugh until the vein in his forehead swelled as big as a cord. I

never heard him laugh so loud after her death. Well, one evening when he had taken me to her grave, and was sitting there with his elbows on his knees, and his face in the palms of his hands, and I was rolling all about in the grass, and thinking about angels and heaven, and wondering how the angels carried the soul to heaven, and what it was like, and whether there were any birds and flowers there—when a globe of music burst over my head, and the notes fell all around me. I looked up, half expecting to see heaven open, and the angels ascending and descending; and then I looked in my father's eyes for an explanation.

"It 's only a bird, my dear," said he.

"A birdy! that 's no birdy, father I know all the birdies."

"It is the nightingale, my dear, and only sings of an evening."

The next evening I went down there to learn the nightingale's song. And my father came seeking me, and found me singing it. After that my father called me his mocking-bird, and when gentlemen from Havana came out to shoot and dine with him he always had his mocking-bird in to sing. I knew no song with words—not one. I only knew the bird-notes, and trilled away at them. They would make me sing them all—the lark's song, and thrush's song, and the nightingale's. They said it was a unique gift—they praised my ear for music, and would advise my father to procure a music master for me; but he would laugh aloud, and say the birds taught me for nothing. When I was about ten years old my father had a little room furnished for me, telling me I was getting to be a great girl now, and must have an apartment of my own. This was my second infant grief. I wept for a whole week at being parted from him. From this time until my fifteenth year strangers used to come out from Havana to hear me sing my bird-songs. Some proposed that I should sing in public, at which my father would roar out laughing till the house would ring. Then they began to call me the mocking-bird of the dell, and to praise my beauty—and then about this time quite suddenly my father kept me away from the dinner parties entirely, at which I was

very much pleased, for there was no pleasure in singing sky-bird songs in the dining-room. Then my father told me that he would put me to school, and he went to Havana to make arrangements for that purpose. He did not succeed in his wish. He offered, I believe, a large sum in vain. They would not receive me. He came home in a terrible mood—he swore frightfully—he cursed himself, my mother, and me, with the whole world besides. He cursed and wept—he pulled me to my mother's grave, and, pushing me on it, bade me die and lie there—it was the only asylum earth held for me. I told him I didn't want to—I had rather live with the birds, and to soothe him I began to sing my nightingale song. It was answered from the tree, and the bird and I kept up the duet, each determined to have the last word. My father was very sensitive; we played upon his nerves like the breeze upon harp strings; he grew composed, then cheerful, then joyful; and, catching me up in his arms, swore by Barnabas "I should be the richest heiress in Cuba, for all their contempt, and that he'd make his will the next day." If he had done so, lady, or if he had even manumitted me (for I was slave as well as child) he would have saved me and others much sorrow—ay, anguish. He did not. He deferred it from day to day—from week to week—from month to month. This was excusable so far as his circumstances went. He was but fifty years old, and his health was good. He had grown and was growing extremely fleshy, short-winded, and drowsy; but that did not warn him from his dinner parties, his hot suppers, and his late hours. Now, dear lady, listen. One day in May I went down into the forest to see the birds. It was so warm, when I got into the deepest part of the dell, I pulled off bonnet, mantilla, shoes, and stockings, and climbed up into a tree, and, sitting on a branch that waved up and down with me, I began to sing. The birds answered, and soon the tree was full of thrushes, and we were all singing together, making a perfect shower of music. So much noise that I did not hear the approach of any one; but looking by chance down, saw a youth—a beautiful youth—in a green hunting-dress, and carrying a gun and game bag. He was standing with

his face turned up, and his eyelashes flared back to his brow, and his large black eyes blazing with surprise. I was frightened, and stopped singing, and exclaimed,—

"Don't shoot us, beautiful youth! and we will sing you a song;" and the birds flew away. "Well, never mind if the birdies *are* gone; they are scarey little things, and always afraid of strangers. As I promised you, I will sing you a song. If you can't have a chorus, you shall have a solo. What will you have? It was the thrush song we were singing just now—will you have that over again, or will you have the lark song, or the nightingale song?"

"Who and what are you, beautiful apparition? Angel, fairy, or wood nymph?"

"I 'm a girl—what sweet eyes you 've got—what 's your name—hey—tell me?"

"Guillieme—pretty mocking-bird."

"Guillieme! that sounds like the sweetest tones in the notes of the thrush, and your sweet eyes are like the deepest notes of the nightingale she sings of an evening; let me sing you her song. I should like to sing for you."

"Sing, bird of paradise!"

"Well, come up here, and sit by me; or no, help me down, and let me sit by you."

He assisted me to get down. I knew no better than to say to him then, as we seated ourselves,—

"There! now put your arm round my waist, and let me get mine around yours—there, that 's nice now!"

And I sung him all the bird-songs I knew, and he began with his other hand to reach and pull flowers to put in my hair, but I said,—

"Oh! please don't pull the flowers; it hurts the little creatures so; it kills them. Never shoot the birds or kill the flowers, Guillieme!"

"I thought you said you knew no music with words set to it?"

"No more I don't."

"Your every word is music, sweet bird."

I sung to him till the sun went down. I sung to him till the moon arose, and then he said,—

"What is your name, mocking-bird?"

"Erminie."

"It is late, Erminie."

"Yes, I know it is, but I don't care."

"All the birds are in their nests but you, Erminie."

"I know they are; they go to bed early, but I had rather stay here with you."

"Have you a mother, Erminie?"

"No, I 've nobody but father."

"Well, your father is waiting for you, Erminie, is he not?"

"Oh, yes! so he is. I must go right home, but you must go with me, Guillieme."

"Yes, mocking-bird, I intend to."

"Well, get me my shoes and stockings, Guillieme, and let me put them on."

He did so. We went home together. Father was walking in the yard. I led him right up to father, and said,—

"Father, here is Guillieme! Is he not beautiful? Ain't you glad I found him and brought him home?"

Father turned short round and looked at him from head to foot.

"What is your name, young man? Who are you, and where did you meet with my daughter?"

He raised his cap from his head, and, bowing gracefully, replied,—

"My name is Guillieme La Chappelle. I am the only son of Monsieur La Chappelle, the leading singer of the first opera house in Paris, now filling an engagement at Havana. I met mademoiselle in the forest, where I went to shoot. I spent two hours delightfully listening to her bird-songs, and I have assumed the honour of attending her home."

My father had an intuitive perception of character, I have since thought. He held out his hand to the young man with a cordiality I had never seen him exhibit before to any one.

"You are welcome, monsieur. I thank you. Come in, come in."

'And, father, don't let him go home to-night; it is too

late, and the birds are all at roost, you know, Guillieme."

"She is a simple child, monsieur. She has never had the benefit of a mother's or even a woman's care."

"She is an angel—an angel."

"Oh! of course," said my father, breaking out into one of his laughs; "I think so myself. Come in, come in She is a good girl enough—come in."

Guillieme La Chappelle went in, stayed late, supped with us, and then would have returned to the city, but my father would not hear of it. He remained all night, breakfasted with us, and set out soon after.

"Come back this evening, Guillieme, will you? and I will sing you all the bird-songs I know I haven't sung you half yet."

Well, he came back that evening, and the next, and the next. He was there almost every evening for a month, and then he brought his father, Monsieur La Chappelle, who was a very handsome, tall, stout, black-haired man, who sung the most charming songs. He and father used to sit late every afternoon over their wine, while Guillieme and I strolled into the forest. Monsieur La Chappelle told father that I could make my fortune on the stage. Father replied that I had a fortune off of it. Monsieur La Chappelle was always with father when off the stage; when *on* he'd carry father to the theatre; they became boon companions, close friends. Guillieme and I were very happy. I believe Guillieme would never have thought of asking my hand if our fathers had not suggested it. One evening, sitting on the bank of violets by my side, he said to me,—

"Erminie, let's get married.'

"Well, so do," said I.

That was my answer to every proposition he ever had made.

"Erminie, let's go a-sailing," he would say. "Well, so do," I'd answer. "Erminie, let's go nutting." "Well, so do." So, when he said, "Erminie, let's get married," I replied, "Well, so do."

And we *were* married. It was the strangest, saddest

oversight in Monsieur La Chappelle, in all of us, to forget the fact that I was a slave. I suppose it was natural. He was a Parisian, and not familiar with all the features of the institution. He thought of me as my father's natural child, and as his probable heiress, but the darker feature in my circumstances had dropped so out of sight that no one thought of it. Perhaps Monsieur La Chappelle did not know that my mother had been a quadroon and a slave, and that I was a slave. I did not know it myself then. Guillieme took up his abode with us, because I did not like to leave my father, and my father liked no better to give me up. Monsieur La Chappelle left Havana to make a tour of the States before he returned to Paris. He came to Havana again on his way to Paris, remained with us a month, and then sailed for France.

A year since our marriage had passed—a year during which Guillieme had taught me to read and write, to draw and paint, and to play upon the piano and harp. At the end of this year Guillieme received a summons to Paris; his father was ill, and no hopes entertained of his recovery. Guillieme obeyed the summons quickly. He went alone. I could not, or rather, they (my father and Guillieme) would not let me go with him, because I was within a few weeks of becoming a mother, and they thought it inconvenient, if not impossible, for me to undertake a long sea voyage at such a time. On the day that he left, my father and myself went with him to Havana, went with him on board the ship, and remained until the last moment. I cannot tell you, lady, how my heart was sinking and dying in my bosom during those last few moments. I waited for the signal to go ashore as a criminal on the scaffold must wait for the signal that launches him into eternity. At last it came. Oh! lady, let me draw a curtain over that parting. When my father took me from his arms I felt my life torn in two—one half of it gone, and the other half quivering in mortal agony. I was convulsed. I had spasm after spasm in the carriage on the way home. My father put me to bed and sent for a physician. I was extremely ill, and that same night my babe was born prematurely, but she lived; and that same night my father

died of apoplexy. I do not know how I ever survived these scenes, or those that followed fast upon them. For days, I believe, I raved in high delirium; for weeks I lay in a deathlike trance. Then stunned, giddy, stupid, I began slowly to recover, to grow half conscious of the scenes enacting around me. When I had lost my reason I was in my own luxurious apartment. When I recovered my senses I found myself and babe in a wretched negro quarter, small, close, damp, and redolent of that foul smell that infects such places. My poor babe was a thin, blue, scrawny, whining little thing, half killed by its premature birth and the cruel neglect that followed it. The old woman who took care of me told me, as I was able to receive it, that "the house up there" was full of grand people, that the heirs at law had come, and that the whole estate—land, negroes, cattle, house, and furniture—was to be sold at auction, and the proceeds divided among the heirs. Lady, I never had a strong mind, everybody said; and now it had been stunned, and stunned nearly into idiocy. I have a confused memory of what occurred about this time, like one's recollection of a nightmare dream. I remember I had a vague fear of being seen in the house where four weeks before I had ruled as its mistress—the very spoiled child of a devoted father, the beloved wife of an adored husband. At last, one evening, it occurred to me to say to the old woman whose hut I shared,—

"Aunt Peggy, why did they take the liberty of turning me out of my father's house, out of my own chamber, when I was too ill to oppose such a measure?"

A gleam of malicious triumph flashed into the woman's face as she said,—

"Accause they wanted the rooms for theirselves. Ah! child, times *is* changed with you, indeed. You ain't no better 'an any o' the rest of us now."

"What do you mean, Aunt Peggy?"

"He! he! he! Ole massa never offered for to give your free papers, did he?"

"Free papers?"

"Dem's dey—have you got dem?"

"I don't know what you mean, aunty."

"Sorry for you; dis is what I mean. You 'longed to old massa jes' as much as any of us; all de same you hadn't been his darter; mudder slave woman—darter slave too."

"But my husband will return," said I.

"Ef he does he can't do nuffin' 't all; you don't 'long to him. Property is property, and you anoder man's property."

From this time all is chaos. Looming out from the darkness, like spectres, stand two or three facts.

I recollect the days of the sale confusedly. I had been told to leave my little baby at the hut when I was called out with the others. I should have done so at any rate, for she was sleeping, and I would not disturb her. It was strange, but I did not suffer now, lady. I seemed to have lost all sensibility. When I stood upon the auction block I felt neither fear, grief, nor shame; only weariness, stupor. I think, lady, they got a high price for me. The report of what the auctioneer called my singular beauty and rare musical genius had reached the city. A trader bought me for the New Orleans market. I was set down from the block, and set apart with his other purchases. I was anxious then to return to my poor little suffering baby, but I could not get away. Every one was too busy to attend to me, except the guard who had in charge my new master's purchases, and a part of his business was to see that I did not leave his care. I spent the long hot summer's day there, sitting among a crowd of negroes in the hot broiling sun, with the hammer and the voice of the auctioneer ringing in my ears, as one article after another was set up and knocked off. All my own little personal property, the furniture of my bedchamber, all given me by Guillieme; my rosewood piano and harp, presents to me from his father; even Guillieme's own effects—his beautiful guns, his pet hounds, his pointers and setters, all were put up and sold, for they were found on the premises, and there was no one to claim them for him. At last, late in the day, the visitors at the sale began to disperse. When they were nearly all gone the guard and the trader began to arrange the negroes they had purchased into marching

order for the city. About twenty negroes, ten couples, preceded me. I was an odd one, and the guard kindly offered me his arm.

"I want to go to my baby, sir," said I

"Your what?"

"My baby, sir; my little baby down in the hut."

"Your baby? You 're a pretty chit of a child to have a baby!"

"But I have, sir. Please let me go to her; my poor little baby is sick, and I have not nursed her to-day."

"A baby—whew-w! I say, boss!"—The trader approached.—"This girl is crying for her baby!"

The trader looked surprised and annoyed. He put the same questions to me that the guard had put, and in addition asked me the age of my child. I told him six weeks. I know if ever a heart could make itself heard in strong anguish through features, words, and gestures, mine did, as I divined their purpose of carrying me off, and leaving my baby behind. I was kneeling, and my hands were clasped, and my face upraised to theirs. They conversed apart, and I heard the words, "Never do,"—"Can't be troubled with it,"—"Injure her sale," &c Then my new master came to me and said,—

"Come, push along, girl; that baby of yours shall be taken care of, but we can't be troubled with it; besides, it does not belong to me; I never bought it."

I wept and prayed in vain. I believe I howled and shrieked, and called on God. I fell upon the ground, and, clinging fast to the shrubbery, refused to go without my baby. They were moved by my anguish, and tried to console me by saying that the child would be taken care of, that the climate to which I was destined was almost always fatal to children carried there. Yes, they were moved, but not to the extent of granting my boon. You know, lady, nothing else would soothe me. I was growing wild—frantic. At last, seeing that I could not or would not get up, the trader's carriage was brought up, and just as I was lifted in I heard the piteous wail of my poor baby's voice come up from the hut in the dell. I started up, screamed aloud, made a desperate effort to escape, dashed my arms

through the glass windows, was forced back.—(Here Minny was interrupted by the force of her emotions. She wept bitterly for awhile, became calm, and resumed.)

From that time everything is blank in memory until I found myself on shipboard, and out of sight of land. Recovered memory only served to throw me back into insensibility; and thus alternating between temporary death and poignant anguish, I was carried to New Orleans, and put under the care of a French doctress, by whose treatment mental power was stupefied and physical power aroused, I suppose, by what followed; for I grew insensible to grief, felt an appetite, ate, drank, and grew fleshy and dull. My master tried to be kind to me, too—told me that my baby was in good hands—that she had been adopted by a lady in Havana, who had promised to write by every packet, and let him know of her well-being. Lady, I believed him then; now I doubt him. The fact is, every means was taken to calm my mind and restore my health and beauty. Then, I supposed it all to have arisen from kindness, and I felt grateful; now, I know that it sprung from self-interest. I could not have brought a good price unless I had been in good order. Well, lady, on the morning of the day upon which I was to be offered for sale the second time, my master came in and put a letter in my hands, purporting to be written to me by Madame Lafon of Havana, the lady who, he told me, had adopted my baby. The letter informed me that my child was improving in health, growing fast, and that she (the lady), having no children, would bring up and educate my child as her own. I believed it every word. And then my master told me that there would be no necessity for her doing that, because I should soon possess my child again; that my husband had found out my condition, and sent an agent on to purchase me when offered for sale. I believed this sooner, and with less hesitation than the first statement, and my credulity sent life and joy careering through my veins—sent light to my eyes and colour to my cheeks, and animation to my whole expression, and in this happy mood I was placed upon the auction block within an hour. The shame of my position was lost in the joy of my new

hope; for I thought that soon distance and time would place the mart at New Orleans far out of sight and thought, and restore me to all that I had loved and had lost. I believe I was in demand; the contest between the bidders ran high. At last I was "knocked down" to an imposing looking gentleman, whom I afterwards found to be Rutland Reeves, Esq., of Richmond. He was a widower without children; a man of immense wealth, and living in great style in that city. I went with him very gladly, supposing him to be the "agent" who was going to carry me to my husband. I need not tell you that I soon discovered the deception that had been practised upon me. I need not tell you of the despair that followed. I have already too much tortured your gentle heart with the tale of my sorrows —sorrows that came upon me, sudden, overwhelming, and destructive, as one of our own West Indian hurricanes but, unlike them, passing not away. I was taken to the luxurious home of my master in Richmond, and my mother's fate had been mine, lady, but that a mother's anguish for her lost babe had impaired my beauty. Lady, you would weep bitterly and refuse to be comforted if the Lord should take your babe to himself, would you not? Well, lady, I would thank God on my bended knees to be assured that my child was in her little grave.—(Here again the hapless young mother wept bitterly. I sought to comfort her by assuring her that every means should be taken immediately to ascertain the fate of her babe, and that her husband should be sought out. She resumed:)—There is little more to tell, lady. My master died; a third time I was set up for sale, and Colonel Dent became my purchaser. He took charge of me immediately, soothed me kindly, told me to dismiss all fear and doubt, that he had purchased me only to save me from the trader; that he should give me an opportunity of working out my freedom, and that my service should be light, about the person of his lady; and then he told me of you, of your gentleness, tenderness, benevolence. He spoke of you so as to make me long to see and to serve you, and then he placed me in charge of Mr. Derby, who brought me hither. Lady, that is all! Lady, next to God in heaven I venerate Colonel Dent.

Oh! it was heavenly to meet his clear, calm, kind eyes, to hear his assured and encouraging voice after what I had suffered from selfish and licentious men. And it was like leaving a burning city full of fire and smoke, and dust and cinders, to rest in a sweet and fresh forest dell—to leave my former circumstances for these. Instead of the insults of hot, excited, half-tipsy glances, I meet your calm, sweet eyes. Instead of muttered oaths, or maudlin flattery, or insulting solicitation, I hear the words of prayer, the notes of music, or the tones of love. And Colonel Dent has made this difference in my life, and I shall reverence him for ever. I love to wait on him, lady; I love to work for him with my own hands. It is such a pleasure to plait his shirt-bosoms, and to see him wear them; for that, at least, I know I can do much better than any one else. Oh! you don't know how I love to plait his bosoms.

"Yes, I do, my child; I know it right well, and you do it beautifully and elegantly, Minny. Always do it, child. I would have everything done for him by the hand of affection. Ever venerate, ever love him, Minny. He is worthy of all veneration, all love. Help me to enrich his life. Ever give him an affectionate and respectful service. When I am sick, as I have been for two or three days past, watch over his comforts; see that he misses no attention that he would receive if I were near him. I will take the opportunity to-night in our bedchamber to tell him your story; and I know Colonel Dent well enough to feel assured that within a week he will have found and despatched a messenger to Cuba, written and sent a letter to Paris, to seek your babe and to inquire for your husband. Cheer up, Minny! Hope. Believe in God. Pray. Be importunate. The Saviour permits us to be importunate by the parable of the unjust judge. I will pray too. Listen, Minny! Every night and every morning in our prayers you and I will beseech our Father to restore you to your husband and child; and while we take every human means toward insuring the accomplishment of our design, we will believe that the event will be determined by infinite Love. Now go down, dear Minny, to your favourite plaiting."

I wished to give her something to do to win her mind from dwelling too long upon the subject of the story she had just been telling. I wished also to be able to analyse and account for the feeling of mingled pain and admiration with which, apart from Minny's story, the name of Guillieme La Chappelle seemed to be associated in my memory. I had not been alone five minutes before the whole truth flashed upon my mind. You remember the catastrophe of the ship Xyphius, burnt off the coast of Bermudas eight weeks ago? You remember the name of the young hero and martyr whose brave exertions saved so many lives that must have been lost but for him? You remember reading that when the fire had nearly reached the powder magazine, he still, in opposition to all that was said to him, continued to row his boat to the burning ship, and bring off the passengers? That he was seen standing on the deck, in the act of assisting an aged man into the boat when the ship was blown up? You know that there is a marble monument erected near the spot to the memory of GUILLIEME LA CHAPPELLE. Alas! I cannot tell Minny this. When we have found her child, and placed it in her arms, then I will tell her that her young husband has found a death more glorious than that of a hero slain in his hour of victory, or saint burning for his faith and the crown of martyrdom, for that he perished saving, and not destroying life; he died for others, not for himself. * * * I have brought my letter quite to the corner of the sixth sheet. Ernest will leave here for your place day after to-morrow. Farewell, dear Juliette. Thy

HESTER.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FALSE BEAUTY.

"Why, I can smile, and murder while I smile,
And cry content to that that grieves my heart,
And wet my cheek with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions."—SHAKSPEARE.

With the exception of the few letters already submitted to the reader's perusal, no well-authenticated documents of the Dent family have come into my possession; therefore I beg leave to continue their story upon the authority of tradition, taking up the narrative at the point at which Mrs. Dent's letters leave it.

There was much in the circumstances and character of Colonel Dent that the partial eyes of his young wife failed to observe. Colonel Dent was undoubtedly a man of high honour, of sincere philanthropy, and of fervent piety: the county said it—all men gave credence to it—and Colonel Dent believed it most implicitly of all. By the way, let that man, of whom every one speaks well, look to his purity. The causes of Colonel Dent's high character for virtue were rather circumstantial and external than innate and self-subsistent. His father had been a "truly good man." An enthusiast in the cause of Liberty, he had spent his youth in the struggle for national Freedom—a devotee to the interests of Humanity, he had, when a bedridden cripple, passed the painful years of mid-life in maturing plans for general emancipation, even when misunderstood or neglected by the very people for whom he had "fought and bled," and by the very race for whom he toiled and suffered. Ernest, his only son, companion, and confidant, being at that time in the legislature—though the channel rather than the spring of the philanthropic plans

that through him found their way to the public mind—reaped all the glory to be gained in a cause advocated by few, neglected by many, and opposed by some; while the true labourer and martyr in the cause of Liberty and Man lay toiling, dying, and forgotten, in the prime of his manhood.

This lasted until his death, when he who had been so neglected or misinterpreted in his laborious and suffering life was all at once understood, appreciated, and honoured —*in his grave*. A reflux of popular sentiment set in strongly in favour of his son; and the political integrity of Ernest Dent, which had safely encountered short-lived but furious storms of opposition, and which had survived the more discouraging and dangerous dead calms of neglect and forgetfulness, was at this time riding upon the crest waves of popular favour, in some danger of being wrecked upon the shore of success. It was at this crisis that he married Hester Grey, the pure-minded, warm-hearted girl, who, with limited powers of perception, seldom thought of looking below the surface, but judged every one by her own heavenly nature. . . . . To return to Juliette Summers, whom we have lost sight of for nearly two years.

Hester's last words to her husband, in commissioning him to bring home her protégée, had been,—

"Remember, dear Ernest, that she is an orphan and a dependent, besides being a woman of high spirit and refined sensibility; therefore, be very delicate in your manner toward her. You will not restrain courtesy; neither, I pray you, fall into the more common, and, to some minds, the more annoying, error of overdoing it. Forgive my caution, but Juliette is proud and sensitive, and has been so unfortunate."

It was the evening succeeding the last day of the school term that Miss Summers sat in her room alone, in attitude of deep thought. Many letters were on her lap, and one was in her hand. From the moment that Hester Grey had left the school Juliette had been tormented with doubts and misgivings concerning the continuance of her young patron's favour. Laying too great a stress upon the value of her own powers of fascination, and giving too little

credit to Hester's benevolence and fidelity, she imagined that when the latter was removed from her presence and influence she would cease to care for her. Every letter written by Hester to herself served to increase her uneasiness. At the receipt of the letter announcing Hester's marriage she had said bitterly,—

"Now Hester is nearly useless to me! I shall undoubtedly find an opponent and an enemy in her husband. Decidedly the worst man she could have selected to suit my purposes."

And a year succeeding this—at the receipt of the letter announcing the birth of her child—the selfish girl had said,—

"And now it is all over with me! In that babe I shall certainly find a rival, and a powerful one."

She held now in her hand the last letter but one that Hester wrote to her while at school (one of the *lost* letters, reader). This letter informed her that Colonel Dent had been elected to the Senate, and that they, with Juliette, should spend the next winter in Philadelphia. This suited Juliette's views very well, so far as it went. To shine in society, and by an eligible marriage to establish herself in the head of it—this was the ultimatum of Juliette's aspirations. And by the splendour of her beauty, the majesty of her grace, the fascination of her manners, and the elegance of her dress, to make people forget her humiliating dependence—were some of the means of effecting her object; and these means could only be used through her influence over her protectors. As for Mrs. Dent, she could wind *her* around her finger with perfect ease; so she dismissed the thought of Hester with something like contempt; but Colonel Dent—*he* was a tough subject; how to influence *him*—that was the difficulty; and it was that problem that Miss Summers was trying to solve, as she sat with her lap full of letters, on the evening of the last day of the school term. "If I could find out his weak points," said Juliette, "and if I could discover what he secretly admires and worships, I should have him at my mercy."

And she gave the letters in her lap a second careful

perusal. At last her face lighted up with a smile of triumph.

"I have it!" thought she; "the weak point in his character is his self-confidence; the object that he most admires in secret is himself. Yes! self-righteous, self-admiring, and self-confident; he lies, or will lie in my power. Shall I flatter his self-love, then? No; for Hester has done that very sincerely, and lost his respect; besides, he would suspect my motives. No; I must pique his self-love first by indifference, to flatter it more effectually by an after-admiration."

"But suppose," suggested a doubt, "that he does not care for your approval or disapproval?"

"Then I will make him care," said Vanity, as Juliette arose and stood before her mirror; and truly the radiant beauty of face, and the matchless dignity and grace of form reflected there, threw no shade of doubt over her confidence.

A servant came in at this moment, and placed in her hands a note from Colonel Dent, dated from a neighbouring hotel, and inclosing Hester's letter, the note informing her that Colonel Dent would call upon Miss Summers at eleven the next morning.

"Now," thought Juliette, "I must commence the fusing of this iron ore by the first rays of my sunny eyes that shall fall upon it."

Then, woman-like, she thought of her dress as a part of the smelting machinery.

"Let me see: he has had enough of Quakerish simplicity in Hester's dark clothing, and enough of finery, doubtless, in the rustic belles of his neighbourhood; I must invent something chaste, beautiful, and *recherché*."

So without any ornament, except a pure white muslin dress and shining black ringlets, Juliette went to the interview. That interview was short; very little was said; and Colonel Dent soon left her. But as he went a voice of sweetest melody seemed murmuring in his ears—a pair of large, dark, dreamy eyes were seeking his glance—a form of exquisite beauty, and motions of exceeding grace were haunting his imagination; and, unconscious of

danger, his thoughts dallied pleasantly with their lovely visitor.

"I must see her early to-morrow, and attend her on her shopping excursion. It will not be discreet to permit an inexperienced young lady to go about the city alone."

And he *did* see her early the next day, and accompanied her on her shopping expedition. The purchases were all made, and Colonel Dent added some costly gifts to Juliette's list for herself, saying to himself, "We must give as Heaven has prospered us."

That night, again, an image of bewildering beauty haunted his thoughts.

"I must take her out to-morrow evening to some place of public amusement. It would be ungenerous to take the girl to the country, without having first shown her something of the city."

And the next evening he took Juliette to a concert, and afterward, of course, attended her home.

The next day he discovered that there was a gallery of paintings open.

"I must take Miss Summers to see that," said he. "Hester requested me to show her every attention; entreated me not to restrain courtesy."

And accordingly he attended Miss Summers to the Gallery of Art.

Late in the week the Museum was opened.

"Juliette must see this collection of rare curiosities, for really she is a very intelligent and a very worthy young lady."

Why had he not said, what he so deeply felt, that she was a most beautiful woman?

He took Juliette to the Museum, and after seeing her home, returned to his hotel, and to his silent room; but the murmur of Juliette's soft "good night" was thrilling upon his ear—the presence of Juliette's hand was warm upon his palm—the gaze of Juliette's dreamy eyes was brooding on him through the shade—the presence of Juliette seemed to fill the room. He sat down in the dark chamber, and gave himself up to that most dangerous of pastimes—reverie—until Conscience, like a faithful

monitor as she is, plucked him by the arm, and whispered,—

"You are thinking too much of this girl. This is wrong, and very dangerous. Turn your thoughts away from the subject."

Upon which Colonel Dent indignantly demanded of Conscience what she meant, requesting to be informed whether he might not be kind to an orphan girl without her meddling interference; and whether there was any more sin in thinking of a beautiful woman than a beautiful statue; and, further, whether she had the impertinence to suppose that he, he, Ernest Dent, could possibly be in danger, and demanding to know whether Conscience had not known him long enough to have confidence in him.

At which Conscience, thus rebuked, sighed, and was silent.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNSELFISHNESS OF FRIENDSHIP.

"'Tis sweet to hear the watch-dog's honest bark,
Bay deep-mouth'd welcome as we draw near home;
'Tis sweet to know there is an eye will mark
Our coming, and look brighter when we come."—Byron.

In the meantime Hester was lovingly preparing to receive her husband and her friend. For Juliette's private apartment she had selected a large front room at the angle of the house, whose front windows commanded a view of the valley stream, the hills, and the distant mountains; while the side windows overlooked the flower garden. This pleasant chamber she had furnished with great care, the bedstead, bureau, wardrobe, &c., being of polished mahogany, and the curtains of white muslin. In a small room that opened from this apartment she had placed a cot-bedstead for the accommodation of Minny, whom she designed to

install as dressing-maid to Miss Summers. On the afternoon of the day upon which she expected the arrival of Colonel Dent and Miss Summers, Hester fidgeted about the house in a state of delighted excitement. She looked into Juliette's room to see if it could possibly be improved, and her eye lighting upon the dark chintz counterpane, she said,—

"Take it off, Minny, and bring me one of those handsome white Marseilles quilts that we bought in Richmond —the one with the deep netting—and put that on your young lady's bed; it is far more beautiful than this dark coverlet, and warmer also; and the nights are chilly in this month."

And as soon as Minny had accomplished that to her satisfaction she looked around again, and exclaimed, as if thinking aloud,—

"Yes, Minny, she shall have that also. Go into my room, and bring hither my ebony workbox; it suits a young lady better than it does me."

And Minny came, bringing in a costly workbox of ebony, richly inlaid with silver, gold, and pearl, lined with white silk velvet, and furnished with thimble, needle-case, &c., of gold or pearl.

"Now, where shall I set it?" said Hester. "Run, Minny, and bring me the little rosewood work-table from which you took this box; she shall have that also. One must not do things by halves."

And when Minny had returned, and when Mrs. Dent had taken from her the work-stand, and arranged it in the pleasantest part of the room, in the corner between the front and the side windows, and had set the elegant box upon it, she exclaimed delightedly,—

"Yes, this is a nice nook; she can sit here at work, and look from one window out upon the mountains, and from the other down upon the flowers, the perfume of which will be wafted to her. Yes, this is a delightful seat. But, Minny, to perfect it, she should have my little sewing chair and ottoman. Go, Minny, if you are not tired of running, child, and bring them."

And Minny went, and returned once more, bearing a

low mahogany chair, with a velvet cushion, and a round, low, foot cushion of embroidered cloth.

"Now, Minny, I think that will do, child. Your young lady can sit and sew here so delightfully when she pleases to work alone. Look around, Minny. Is there anything else *you* can suggest?"

"No, madam."

"Is there anything for your *own* little room that you could like, child?"

"No, madam," said Minny, very sadly, for she was very sorry to change services.

"If there is anything at all, speak, child, for you shall have it."

"There is nothing, indeed, ma'am."

"Then, Minny, we 'll go down and see after those rice-cakes."

And so, after fidgeting about the room a few minutes longer—giving a few extra touches to the folds of curtains, the hang of valances, and pausing to take a pleased survey of the whole—Hester went down into her kitchen to prepare an unusual assortment of delicacies for tea. And after her cake was iced, her preserves put into cut-glass saucers, and the best gilt-edged porcelain tea-service put out on a large waiter—and after Harriet, the housemaid, and Samuel, the waiter, had received particular injunctions about setting the table, and an especial injunction not to break anything, Mrs. Dent called Minny, and went into the nursery to dress the baby in her prettiest French-worked white slip; and after that operation was gone through, with the usual accompaniment of kicking and squalling, and "baby" had become quiet and pretty—the vain little mother looked at her, and, addressing herself familiarly to her nurse, said,—

"Now, don't you think she has really grown some since her father went away, Minny?"

"I suppose she has, ma'am."

"But don't you see it? Remember, he has been gone a fortnight."

"I cannot perceive that she has grown, ma'am," said the truthful Minny.

"But, of course, she has," persisted the mother. "And now, Minny, take care of her; amuse her and keep her awake, unless she is very sleepy, until they come. I must go down and see if they are setting that table right Dear! how I do miss Mrs. Wimsat."

The dining-room was immediately under the apartment assigned to Juliette, being the corner room where rich windows opened into the garden. It was there that the tea-table had been set; and the evening being delightful, the windows were open, and the fragrance of flowers filled the room. The sun was setting, and his last rays came in through these garden windows, falling upon and lighting up the glittering tea-table. It was a scene of elegance and comfort, of light and fragrance; and no wonder that Hester smiled as she entered.

"Yes, this is all very nicely arranged, Samuel. Go and tell Minny Dozier that she may bring little Miss Juliette down now as I am at leisure."

And a few minutes after that Hester, with her smoothly braided hair, and neat white wrapper, and Minny, with the pretty babe in her arms, stood out upon the piazza, watching the descent of a carriage down the mountain road. The carriage drew near, and stopped at the gate. Hester's first impulse was to fly to meet them; but recollecting her husband's dislike to demonstrative affection, she restrained herself, while her heart beat quickly, and a flush came to her cheeks, and a light to her eyes, making her pretty for the moment. Soon Colonel Dent was on the porch, and his wife had placed her hand in his, and offered her cheek to his cool and formal salute an instant, and then she was caught away from him to the fervent embrace of Juliette.

"Miss Summers is very tired, Hester," observed Colonel Dent, as he handed Juliette into the house.

"Yes, yes; come, dear Juliette, I will show you your room. Tea will be ready in a moment, Colonel. Do, Ernest, look at the babe while I attend Juliette; she has grown so much. Bring her in, Minny. Come, dear Juliette, this way."

And so saying, Hester conducted her friend upstairs to

her charming room, wheeled round a large easy-chair, and set her down in it, saying,—

"Now, sit still and rest, love, while I unhook your pelisse and take off your bonnet and gloves. Let me wait on you now, love, that we may be alone the first few minutes."

And, as Hester untied her bonnet and laid it off, she stopped suddenly, caught Juliette around the neck, and imprinted a warm kiss upon her glowing cheek, exclaiming,—

"Oh! I 'm so happy to have you here, my love, my beauty, my own dear sister!"

Miss Summers seemed overcome with emotion, and could only murmur, in broken sentences, expressions of fervent gratitude and affection. At length, with more apparent self-command, she said,—

"I was unjust to you awhile ago, dear Hester. I fancied that your reception of me was cool."

"No, no; no, no," said Hester, hastily. "Indeed, my joy was, and is now, unspeakable to see you; but my husband considers all betrayal of emotion childish and puerile, or even ridiculous, and has often rebuked me for the folly, so that I try to restrain the expression of my feelings."

"Then he must be very cold and hard, sweet Hester."

"Oh! no, no; indeed, you do him great wrong to think that. Oh! no, indeed; on the contrary, he has very strong feelings, but he has also a strong will to control them," said the wife, looking at her friend as though she had spoken blasphemy.

Then Juliette declared herself to be sufficiently rested to prepare for tea, requested to have her trunks brought up, bathed her face and eyes, put on a white muslin dress, arranged her ringlets, and professed herself ready to go down. They entered the dining-room, and the cheerful party sat down at table. Juliette's bright face and attractive manners threw quite a beam of sunshine between the serious, timid young wife, and the grave, austere husband. Never had Hester seen her husband so cheerful, genial, and debonair as now; and never had she felt the restraint

of his authority lifted from herself as now; never had she felt so lively and so young. The little party lingered over the tea-table until the drawing room, in the other wing of the house, was lighted up, and then, as Juliette affirmed that her fatigue was entirely gone, Mrs. Dent led the way thither, saying almost familiarly to her husband,—

"Now, dear Ernest, at last you shall have some music. Juliette is a proficient, and I have had the instrument put in complete tune while you were gone, in anticipation of this treat;" and, passing gaily on, she opened the piano, wheeled out the music stool, and selected a fine piece of Haydn's.

"But," said Colonel Dent, "Miss Summers may be out of voice by reason of her recent fatigue. It would be cruel to tax her kindness under such a circumstance."

"Oh! no, indeed; I never make that very trite excuse, colonel. Your lady has led me to expect a rich treat in *your* vocal harmony; so if you will join me, we will try to astonish the woods and hills and streams about here," said Juliette, gaily taking her seat at the piano. Then her eyes fell upon the music selected, and, turning to her friend, she inquired,—

"Is this your choice, Mrs. Dent?"

"Yes, dear."

"Oh! you spiritual Hester! You are a rich, sweet, solemn strain of music yourself. Come, colonel," said she, playing the prelude, "tell us that you 've got a bad cold, clear your throat, and begin;" and presently the heavenly strains of Haydn arose upon the air, entrancing and carrying with them the souls of the hearers. And time passed away unheeded by the rapt enthusiasts until the clock was upon the stroke of one, when at the close of the last piece Juliette arose from the piano, her countenance elevated and glowing with the inspiration of the music; and took her seat. The little party was silent with deep emotion, and soon after separated for the night.

Hester attended her friend to her room again, and remained with her until she had retired. Nor was that all. Just before Juliette sank to sleep she heard a light footstep about her bed; and, looking up, there stood Hester

in her night-dress. To her inquiries Hester replied softly,—

"When I had lain down, dear Juliette, I found that the musquitoes were troublesome, and so I just arose and returned to draw your curtains."

Stooping down, and imprinting a kiss upon her brow, she murmured,—

"Good night again God bless you, love," and stole from the room.

The next morning Hester was up early to get something extra for breakfast, and to see that the coffee was made particularly nice, and soon after the cheerful little party assembled. Most of my readers know how joyous is the reunion at the breakfast table with long-absent friends, who had come home the evening previous. They seem newly given to our affection. Hester received her friend, as she entered the drawing-room, with a beaming smile. Colonel Dent also rose, and led her to a seat at the table. Hester set a cup of fragrant coffee before Juliette, but felt a little disappointed when the young beauty smilingly put it away, and begged a glass of water. Miss Summers had no notion of tarnishing her complexion by stimulants. However, Hester sent for a pitcher of rich milk, and pressed a glass of it upon Juliette's acceptance, and was gratified by having her dairy, at least, praised by her friend.

When breakfast was over the family separated. Colonel Dent went to his granaries, Hester to her nursery, and Juliette to her own apartment, from which, however, she was soon brought by Hester, who, after attending to her housekeeping, came with the pride of a young wife, to conduct Juliette over her house; an amusement that occupied the whole forenoon, as the little housekeeper would even display her cupboards, filled with rows of preserves and pickle-jars, all made by her own hands—and her chests of household linen, all carded, spun, and wove by her own domestics, out of flax grown upon her husband's soil.

"This flax is grown upon the north slope of the lowest hill in front of our house—Marcus's hill I always call it, because in going over that hill he always gets up a poetic fervour," said Hester, as, closing the chest, she passed from

the linen-room, and accompanied Miss Summers into the apartment of the latter, where they sat down for a talk.

"By the way, Hester, where is your friend Marcus, of whom you wrote me so much? I have quite a curiosity to see him. And where is Mrs Wimsat? You seem to be here quite alone."

"They are both on a visit of a week to Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny. Marcus is at last really engaged, and Fanny is the 'elect lady.' I have invited Miss Huldah and Fanny to-morrow to see you, and I suppose our truants will come home with them."

"Are you short-breathed, dear Hester?" inquired Miss Summers, keenly regarding her friend, as the latter paused in speaking, and pressed her hand upon her chest.

"Oh! no, love, only when I walk so much, or come up a long flight of stairs."

Again Hester stopped short, and laboured for breath, and her face flushed.

Juliette took her hand and held it an instant; then said, as she looked upon her burning cheek, "You have a very fine colour now, dear Hester; you have entirely lost that sallow complexion you had at school."

"Oh! yes; my complexion has cleared off. I 'm glad of it. I like to be a little less homely on my husband's account."

"Yes; but *I* always thought you pretty, Hester; and so no doubt does Colonel Dent, and Marcus, you know. Marcus thought you too pretty for his peace, and now you are very much improved. You have such good spirits, also," continued Miss Summers, looking at her friend's bright eyes.

"Oh! yes, excellent spirits. Why should I not have, with so many blessings, and *Juliette home* too? Let 's see; it is now one o'clock, dear Juliette. I must go and see to my custards. Kitty is a good creature, but a sad bungler at confectionery. Amuse yourself for an hour until my return. Shall I send Minny to you? Oh! by the way, how do you like your little attendant?" asked she, gravely.

"Oh! very much, indeed. Ah, Hester, I have seen

and felt your kindness deeply. I 've no words to thank you. I had best not make the attempt. I should fail to express——"

Hester cut her short with a kiss, and slipped out of the room.

Miss Summers went into the library, and, after a search, returned to her room with a medical work in her hand, locked her door, and sat down to turn over its leaves. She found the chapter on CONSUMPTION, and perused it attentively. At last, closing the book, she sank into a reverie; then she muttered low, "Yes, Hester is marked for the GRAVE. No one sees in the brilliant colour, bright eyes, and high spirits of the once pale and serious girl the burning of a hidden fire that is consuming her life—no one but me! Well, perhaps, after all——" and her reverie dropped into silence again.

"But this is wrong, this is wicked, this is diabolical," said Conscience, breaking in upon her reverie. Your friend! your benefactress! Oh! this is fiendish, and you must stop it!"

"The lady of the future governor!" interrupted Pride.

"Now is your best opportunity. Now you have no rivals. In the future you may have many and successful ones," insinuated Duplicity.

"And now you would be sure to succeed in winning him. And how perfectly such peerless beauty and grace as yours would adorn the station to which you aspire," whispered Vanity.

A clear, silvery, happy laugh rang out upon the air, and, like an angel's mandate, dispelled the gathering and consultation of evil passions in Juliette's bosom. They shrunk down into the deeps of her heart, like guilty things as they were, as Hester's sweet laugh floated upon the air.

"Be quiet, Marcus; you shall not go in. It would be a breach of decorum; I will take them in myself;" and, opening the door, Hester entered with a sunny smile, bearing a little wicker basket of fine peaches, and saying,—

"These were sent you by Fanny, Juliette. Marcus brought them, and it was as much as I could do to prevent his coming in. He insisted that he was commissioned to

give the fruit to Miss Summers himself, and he would do so."

"And when is Fanny coming?" inquired Juliette.

"Oh, to-morrow—to spend the whole day, of course," said Hester, preparing to leave the room. "But, dear me, darling, what are you doing with the doctor's book?"

"I was looking to see what he recommends as the best dentifrice. Please, dear, tell Mr. Derby that the fruit is very acceptable, and that I hope to express my thanks for his kindness when we meet at dinner," said Juliette.

And at dinner Marcus Derby met for the first time the sunny-eyed coquette; and her effect upon that impressible young gentleman may be guessed at from the strain of encomium into which he broke when taking leave of Colonel Dent at the gate,—

"A fine woman, colonel! A superb woman! The *chef-d'œuvre* of nature,—

'Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.'"

"Go about your business, sir! You are a fool! How dare you, pert boy that you are, to speak so of any young lady under my protection?"

"Gadzooks!" exclaimed Marcus, as he rode from the gate quite crestfallen. What 's the matter with Ernest? It 's the first time in all his life he ever gave me shortness. What can be the matter with Colonel Dent? He never gave me ginger for anything I ever said to Hester. I might praise or dispraise her as much as I liked, for anything *he* cared. But this beauty is set upon a pedestal, with a platoon of guards around her. Plague on it! I hope he ain't in love with her himself; an old married man like he is, too! Switch me if I don't watch him, and if he *has* turned fool I 'll cut his throat for *your* sake, Hester, and for *mine* too; deuce take me if I don't. Oh, a beautiful woman! Heavens! a sweet, sweet woman! Goodness! I shall lose my breath! Oh, a sweet, sweet woman!" And Marcus, half unconsciously, turned his horse's head down the valley, instead of going over the hills to Miss Gales's farm, where his fidelity should have led him

The next morning Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny drove up in their old-fashioned carryall, and Fanny greeted her schoolmate, Juliette, with much warmth; asked her how she liked the peaches—they were from a tree of Marcus's. By the way, she wondered why Marcus had not returned as he promised. And where was he now? This last question was answered by the entrance of Marcus himself, pale, haggard, and dejected. He saluted the company, and took a seat by himself. Miss Huldah Gales took this opportunity to whisper to Mrs. Dent,—

"A fine young man, ma'am—a very fine young man. So *steady* for his years. I esteem myself happy in securing to Fanny so excellent a protector. So good a youth is seldom met with in this wicked world."

Taking advantage of a moment when he was unobserved, Marcus slipped a small paper in the hand of Miss Summers, and soon after stole from the room.

"Is your young friend mad, my dear Hester?" inquired Miss Summers of her friend, as they met together after the departure of their guests. "He put in my hands to-day a piece of poetry addressed 'To Juliette,' and commencing,—

> Oh! would that we had met before,
> Ere yet that fatal vow was spoken!'

What does he mean? What now? What 's he driving at, do you know?"

"What does he mean? Yes, I *do* know," said Hester, in a tone of vexation. "He 's fallen in love with you now, and he 'll break Fanny's heart; that 's what he means. Oh! Juliette, *do* repulse him sharply; affront him; insult him; box his ears; do anything rather than let him pursue this; for, unworthy as he is in some respects, Fanny does love him, and his defection would go hard with her."

"I shall not repulse him very sharply," thought Juliette, as she sunk to sleep. "The fool may be useful to me, and Miss Fanny must take care of herself."

Hester was seriously disturbed; so seriously, that, upon retiring to her own room, she said to her husband, "Ernest, I am hurt. Marcus has gone and fallen in love with Juliette, who despises him; and he will abandon

Fanny, to whom he is engaged; that is, if we do not prevent it. Can't you find something for Marcus to do at a distance for a few months, until we go to Philadelphia?"

"Fallen in love with Miss Summers! Are you sure, Hester?"

"I have seen a very impassionate effusion of poetry that he has addressed to her, filched from some album or other, for I recollect having seen the lines somewhere before."

"And you think he will break with Fanny?"

"Indeed, I fear so. In these same verses he laments his engagements."

"The perfidious villain! I 'll forbid him the house at once! A man to do such a thing deserves to have his neck broken."

"But, poor fellow, I think he can't help it. It is his foible; he is to be pitied."

"Pitied! I am surprised at you, Hester. I am grieved to perceive in you a disposition to tolerate perfidy. He shall leave my house, and never set foot in it again until he has returned to his allegiance and married Fanny."

Hester wondered in silence what had moved her husband to such unusual warmth and bitterness of invective—against Marcus, too, towards whom he was usually so very indulgent.

Colonel Dent, however, at Hester's earnest entreaty, reconsidered his threat, and improved upon his first project by giving Marcus the direction of a farm he was getting under cultivation, about ten miles on the other side of Miss Huldah Gales's plantation, placing Mrs. Wimsat at the same time in the farm-house as housekeeper. This plan, together with Hester's serious remonstrance with him, and the young man's own innate sense of justice, served to arrest for the present his dangerous passion. From his new home there was no way to reach The Vale without passing through Miss Huldah's plantation. Of course, he would have to call, and then Fanny's attractions, assisted by his own wish to do right, in spite of temptation, held him captive.

Juliette Summers became the belle of —— county. She

was called the beauty of Virginia. Did Colonel Dent ask himself why it was that the approach of any man to the side of Juliette roused the couchant tiger in his heart? Why, when they were in the same room, he ever caught himself involuntarily veering round toward her, from whatever point of the compass he might be, as the needle follows the magnet? Why, when she left the room, his very soul shrunk and contracted, and he became cold and dark, as though she had carried off the sun? Why, when she re-entered, light, and heat, and life returned with her? Why the atmosphere around her was so surcharged with electricity that at the fall of her stately footstep the ground trembled beneath his feet; at the sound of her full-toned voice the air shuddered around him? No! his intellect kept itself aloof from his heart—would not descend into its depths, and pry into its secrets. He was becoming intoxicated with a strange excitement, half ecstasy, half anguish. Where would this end? He did not ask himself. Thus, for the first time in his life, in his strong and ardent maturity, he was being drawn into the maelstrom of a ruinous passion. Would it end in guilt? He would not ask. His mind kept itself fearfully, shudderingly away from investigating the secrets and purposes of his heart.

CHAPTER X.

THE GRASP OF THE DESTROYER.

"*How terrible is passion—how our reason*
Falls down before it, while our tortured frame,
Like a ship dash'd by fierce encountering tides,
And of her pilot spoil'd, drives round and round,
The sport of wind and wave."—BARFORD.

I PASS over a few months of time, every stroke of which, however, had been tallied upon the heart and mind of Ernest Dent, obliterating the writing of years therefrom; every stroke of which struck off a year of Hester's life, as

the hours pressed heavily and more heavily upon her, bearing her down slowly but surely to the grave; every moment of which was counted with secret exultation by Juliette Summers, as it brought her nearer the goal of her secret aspirations.

Upon Colonel Dent a new and unfortunate love of popularity and distinction was growing. He had been named, as Juliette had foreseen would be the case, as the probable next governor of the state. He was much from home, and his electioneering schemes were a continual draught upon his purse, so that even the negroes, who had ever been faithfully paid up on the first of every month, were now put off from time to time. Their zeal for work diminished in consequence, and the effect began to be seen in the deterioration of the model farm. This had gone on some months, when Hester ventured to remonstrate, and drew upon herself a severe rebuke.

At length the time for the meeting of Congress approached, and Colonel Dent, with his family, went to Philadelphia. Just before they left home, Hester received a letter from her quondam teacher, Mrs. Nichols, informing her that she had received a legacy from the will of a wealthy cousin, who had died in England, and that this legacy of three thousand dollars had enabled her to quit teaching, and to establish a congressional boarding-house, and requesting the patronage of Mrs. Dent's family. Hester laid this letter before her husband, and was made happy by his acceding to the request contained therein. So to Philadelphia and to Mrs. Nichols's boarding-house they went. Their family, consisting of Colonel and Mrs. Dent, with a nurse and child, and Miss Summers, with her maid Minny, quite filled up Mrs. Nichols's house, so that they had it to themselves. For the first week a few cards were left for the new comers. They received few visits, however, for, worn out with the fatigue of her journey, Hester lay upon the sofa most of the time; while Miss Summers was out, engaged with milliners and dressmakers, and Colonel Dent was absent, renewing his acquaintance with long-absent political friends.

At the end of the first week, with one of those sudden and deceptive changes of her disease from low to high action, Hester revived. She was not "better," she said, for she had not been "sick." She had only been very much fatigued, and was now recovered from it, quite recovered, and in such high spirits. Now she, too, accompanied Miss Summers in her shopping expeditions; ay, and derived pleasure from her excursions. Hester, with her intense love of the beautiful in everything, was far from indifferent to beautiful jewellery, beautiful flowers and feathers, and beautiful laces and ribbons, only she did not like these things upon her own person; she forced them upon Juliette's acceptance. Juliette was her ideal of beauty. She delighted to adorn her, and was enthusiastic in her admiration. Colonel Dent had placed five thousand dollars at his wife's disposal on their first arrival at Philadelphia, and now Hester was making it fly like grain from a thrashing-machine. One of their first visits was to the establishment of the most fashionable jeweller, Lapide. Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers were inspecting some new jewellery from Paris just opened. Juliette was admiring an elegant set of diamonds, consisting of a tiara, necklace, bracelet, and brooch. The price, three thousand dollars, was far above her means, above her present hopes; yet still she looked at, handled, and admired them, and could not tear herself from them, while she thought what an imperial air they would lend her as an addition to the rich purple velvet dress she had ordered. Hester was at the opposite counter, buying a set of coral for her baby. She concluded her purchase, came to the side of Juliette, and observed her occupation; and as she did so a pleasure began to vibrate up from the bottom of her heart, and filled her whole soul with gladness as she thought:—"Poor Juliette, how shrunk and sterile her life must be when her happiness depends upon such things as these, elegant though they are. Poor Juliette, she is not so happy as I am; with the diamond mines of Golconda she would not be so happy as I am, because she has no Colonel Dent. Dear Juliette, she shall have them;

she shall have everything I can get for her, because, alas! I can't get her a husband." And she touched Miss Summers's elbow, and whispered,—

"Order them, Juliette."

"No!" exclaimed Miss Summers, in a low tone of surprise. "You do not know the price; they are three thousand dollars."

"Take them, take them, darling! It will make me happy to see you wear them. I shall be so proud of you."

"Oh, Hester! but this is extravagant; you have given me so much!"

"My love! I wish I could give you—*happiness.*"

And Hester in her enthusiasm wished to press her to her bosom, but could not then. The jewels were ordered and sent home, of course. In all her extravagance Hester, from sheer forgetfulness, had purchased nothing for herself. In her extreme self-forgetfulness she did not even remember that, though little Hester in her valley home was at liberty to wear anything she pleased, so that her dress was neat, graceful, and becoming, yet the custom of city society required that the wife of Colonel Dent should dress in a style proper to his rank. No, she did not even recollect that, until one day a lady, very richly attired, called on her. When the lady was gone Colonel Dent, who had been present, remarked,—

"Mrs. —— is a very elegant woman; do you not think so, Hester?"

"Yes, but not so elegant as Juliette! Now you must confess, Ernest, that among all the ladies we have seen, even among the crowds of splendid beauties that flock to the state-house, we have seen no one to compare with our superb Juliette. You must confess that."

He did confess it in the bottom of his heart, but he answered,—

"Yes, I approve Miss Summers's style of costume. I like to see women well dressed."

And now the truth broke on Hester's mind. She had been mortifying her "Colonel Dent" to death by her self-neglect. She looked down at her drab merino gown, and blushed to the edges of her hair, and then looked up and

smiled as she met her husband's conscious look She said,—

"Yes, it is too bad, Ernest, I acknowledge it. What have I been thinking of? Why didn't you mention it before, dear Ernest?"

"Really, Hester, you are rather ridiculous. Such matters, I think, belong to yourself, your milliner, and your hair-dresser, not to me."

With a sudden impulse she started up, and threw her little arms around his great neck in a free, frank, and childlike manner, exclaiming,—

"Do you not think, Ernest, that if I fancied I should like you better in any particular coat I would tell you so?"

This was not like Hester. Ernest Dent was surprised and pleased. He returned her caress, nearly crushing her slight form in the embrace of one strong arm, and then he released and seated her where he knew she loved to sit, on the low ottoman by the side of his large chair, with her arm resting upon and half embracing his knee—with her face upraised in loving reverence to his countenance.

"You are strangely changed of late, Hester," said he; "you, who were such a demure girl at school, and such a sedate little matron at home, are now really in some danger of growing wild."

"Oh! I know I am, Ernest; I have such gay spirits: what *can* be the reason? My blood is always racing through my veins, and my heart is always dancing in my bosom. I have constantly to recall Senator Dent's dignity and gravity to keep myself in order," said she, smiling.

Poor thing! The exhilarating fever of incipient consumption was burning in her cheeks, glowing on her lips, sparkling in her eyes, and sending the blood with an accelerated speed through her veins. He placed his broad palm under her chin, and supported her face while he gazed upon it. He noticed her pure white forehead, her clear brilliant eyes, the bright hectic flush upon her cheeks, the fever glow of her crimsoned lips, the beautiful transparency of her complexion, and the high spirituality of her countenance, and a suspicion of her real condition dawned on his mind. His heart was touched. He became

agitated, arose, and walked to the front window, and looked out to conceal his emotion. Juliette Summers, splendidly arrayed, was just entering the front gate. She looked up, met his eyes, and smiled a flash of light and love down into the deeps of his soul. A new thought struck and electrified him. He turned away. Evil spirits were mustering thick and fast to his soul, and presenting the possible future he ardently desired, yet loathed himself for desiring. His great strong heart was labouring terribly—his face flushed and paled. He went to the table, and poured out and swallowed glass after glass of cold water. His fever cooled, his agitation subsided, conscience and reason began to resume their sway, and pity entered in. He went to Hester, resumed his seat, and drew her to his bosom, saying, as he stroked her soft hair,—

"Hester, you are not well, my love This excitement of your spirits is unnatural, feverish, diseased. I have neglected you too long. I must send for Dr. Rush to see you."

"Is that what troubles you, Ernest? I saw something troubled you when you started up just now, and I thought that it was my wildness, and I felt so sorry; but *that*—dear Ernest, how kind you are to me;" and the tears welled up to her eyes as she spoke; "but, dearest Ernest, your fears are quite groundless, believe me, they are. I never felt half so well or so happy in all my life before."

"Hester!" he replied, "this exciting city life will never suit you; the season has scarcely commenced yet; you have no idea what it will be; you will be constrained to join in every sort of fashionable dissipation, and it will destroy your health, for you need repose, Hester. I think I shall take you all back to The Vale, Hester."

"Not for the world, if you please, dear Ernest, on my account. It would be such a disappointment to Juliette. She has anticipated so much pleasure from this her first winter in town. It is *my* first winter, too, but no matter for that. Oh, no, dearest Ernest! Juliette will be the queen of beauty and of fashion here. She is so transcendingly beautiful. I have quite set my heart upon marrying

Juliette splendidly this season to some noble man whom she can adore as—I——"

He nearly pushed her off his knee as he exclaimed,—

"Disgusting! If there is anything on God's earth that I despise it is a match-making woman."

And, rising angrily, he left the room. Perhaps *now* he would have carried into effect his purpose of taking his family back to Virginia had not a bill of great importance been brought before the senate, which for a time absorbed his attention. Hester had meekly and quietly received his sharp words as a well-deserved rebuke; had taken the first opportunity of telling him that she knew match-making *was* wrong, and that she had abandoned, or would try to abandon, all such ambitious views for Juliette; and then Hester's cheerfulness returned with the kiss of reconciliation.

You should have seen Hester in Philadelphia about this time. She was such a happy little lady! So proud of her great big distinguished husband! And then his office, she invested it with the glory of her own bright, young imagination. To her awe-struck vision the senate was indeed the concentrated strength and glory—"the assembled wisdom of the nation;" and first in wisdom as in goodness there was Colonel Dent—*her* Ernest Dent. And then his first speech! How she longed to hear his first speech; how brilliant she knew it would be; how proud she knew she should be of it; but this pride she conscientiously tried to suppress, to exterminate, for she dared not let her husband see it. She knew he would say, "How ridiculous, Hester." The day upon which *the* bill, for the destruction of which Colonel Dent had prepared so much ammunition, had to be taken up, was at hand. It was the second week after their arrival. They had as yet received but few visits, and paid none. Colonel Dent was shut up in his study; Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers were dressed to go to the state-house. Miss Summers, as usual, looked superbly beautiful. Her dress was rich and gorgeous beyond compare, but still not gay. The dark and bright always predominated in Juliette's beauty, character, and costume, as the neutral tints did in

Hester's. Hester would have now looked very pretty by the side of any other woman but Juliette. Her graceful little person was arrayed in a French grey satin dress, with a large white crape shawl, and white bonnet and plume, and her small hands were encased in delicate white kid gloves. This was some of Hester's new finery, and it was the first time she had put it on. Colonel Dent came through the room, and, charmed by his young wife's delicate beauty, smiled on her, drew her to his bosom in a warm embrace, released her, and, passing on, left the room. He had not perceived Miss Summers, who was sitting in a distant part of the room. Hester now turned toward her, however, and observed a bright, mirthful smile hovering about the corners of Juliette's eyes and lips.

"What are you smiling at, Juliette, my love?"

"At these men, dear! these philosophers! who affect to despise our 'frivolous' love of dress, while we know at the same time that we only hold their hearts by a chain of ribbons and lace. His Honour the Judge on the bench of the Supreme Court, his Excellency the President, and the Honourable the Senator who has just passed out—each has his wise head and prudent heart as much entangled in the meshes of a lace shawl, the leaves of an artificial flower, or the feathers of a plume, as the silliest woman of us all! Never believe, my love, 'beauty, when unadorned, adorned the most.' That is a poetic fiction."

The re-entrance of Colonel Dent arrested the reply of Hester. He came to conduct the ladies to their carriage. When they were all seated he turned to his wife, and said,—

"Hester, I wish you to give me a little assistance to-day. Instead of taking you to the senate chamber I shall conduct you into the library, where I wish you to do a little work for me if you have no objection."

"Certainly not, colonel; but what is it? But, oh! shall I miss hearing your speech?"

"Assuredly, Mrs. Dent, you will miss hearing my speech, but that is a small matter: is there no greater obstacle, Hester?"

"None in the world, colonel. Tell me what you wish me to do."

"It is this, then, Hester. Now give me your close attention while I explain it, so that you may understand it thoroughly. They are going to have that tedious bill relative to the purchase of Louisiana up before the Senate to-morrow. As I shall be engaged all this day upon this Indian bill, what I wish you to do is, to assist me in collecting statistics relating to the Louisiana question. You will have to look over certain files of old newspapers, and certain volumes of colonial debates that I will show you." And then he proceeded to describe to her the state of the question as it lay before Congress, explaining fully the nature of the statistics he wished her to collect.

Poor Hester! she had no head for business at all. Names and dates always confounded her, politics puzzled her, figures flurried her, business bothered her; and now, though she gave her "closest attention" to her husband's explanation, she did not comprehend the subject a whit more after he had ended than before he commenced. However, she did not wish to appear stupid or unwilling, so she said nothing but "Yes, yes," at the close of every sentence, and she thought that when she should see the papers and books she would ask Colonel Dent to point out to her more distinctly what he wished her to do. As yet she did not like to show her dulness of apprehension, lest her husband should think her unwilling to do the work, and take it out of her hands when she felt so anxious to be of service to him; so she said nothing of her incapacity, but determined to try, hoping to succeed. Miss Summers had been listening eagerly. What an astute woman she was! She comprehended the subject fully. To her it was all transparent, and a plan was maturing in her mind to illustrate her own talents, and win Colonel Dent's admiration at Hester's expense. True, when she looked at Hester's sweet wan face, and recollected her countless benefits to herself, her better nature arose and whispered, "Do not do this; she has been more than mother, sister, friend, to you. She has been your guardian angel; she has shielded you from the rude blast of the world; she has crowned

you with mercy and loving-kindness.' Do not do her a mortal injury. See how her sweet eyes wait upon her husband's countenance; see how her little fingers quiver with their eagerness to be engaged in his service! Do not deprive her of this pleasure. Lend your talents to succour, to shield, to assist her in her fond wish. There! see how her eyes are turned in affection upon your own, wondering what makes you thoughtful, and fearing that you are out of spirits. Abandon your purpose. Do not seek by any means to deprive her of her dearest treasure—her husband's heart—the loss of which would be fatal to her." But Juliette Summers suppressed this better nature, and replied determinately, "I will suffer *no* opportunity to slip for throwing another coil of the chain that binds him around Ernest Dent," and she strangled the feeling of compunction to death.

They reached the state-house, and Colonel Dent conducted his ladies into the library, took them to a secluded nook, placed two chairs, in which they sat down, drew a table up before Hester, pulled out a drawer containing stationery, and, pointing to a pile of huge volumes by her side, said,—

"These contain the files of papers from which I wish you to make extracts," looked at his watch, and abruptly left the room.

Hester thought that he had gone to bring something, and expected momentarily to see him return, but as time passed, and he did not come back, she grew uneasy.

"Why do you not begin, my love?" inquired Miss Summers.

Hester looked the perfect picture of dismay as she replied,—

"I have not the slightest idea of what I am required to do. I had expected Colonel Dent would have stopped and pointed out to me the extracts he wished me to make."

"But you know, my love, he has to speak to-day at twelve, and it is now," said she, referring to her watch, "half-past twelve. He is well embarked in his oratory by this time. We shall not see him again these three hours."

"Oh, dear me!" said Hester, almost ready to cry out, "What shall I do?"

"Perhaps it will be time enough when he returns to us," suggested Juliette.

"Oh, my goodness! No, it will not. Ernest particularly requested me to have the work completed by the time the Senate adjourned."

"Heavens! that *is* unfortunate," exclaimed Miss Summers, with well-feigned surprise and regret.

Hester clasped her hands, and looked at Juliette with that imploring expression of countenance by which a gentle and timid nature appeals to a strong and assured one. You will think this very exaggerated distress; but, poor little sensitive thing, she was ever so anxious to do everything she could to serve her husband, and to disappoint him —she would not have done it for the whole world. And the matter now in hand, which *was* really important, seemed to her of unexampled moment. All matters of national policy seemed to her of such stupendous consequence. She clasped her hands, and looked imploringly in Juliette's face.

"Let me do it," said Miss Summers, kindly.

"You, Juliette!"

"Yes, my love. I understand what he wants done perfectly."

"Then, oh! dear, dear Juliette, make me understand it too," exclaimed Hester, joyfully, as she drew the paper before her, dipped her pen in ink, and prepared to commence.

"My dear, I cannot," replied Miss Summers. "Colonel Dent explained it to you with far more clearness than I can pretend to, yet he could not make you comprehend the subject, my little love. You are no politician, and, happily, you have no need to be one." Then coming around the table to the huge pile of books, she selected one volume, and, raising it up, laid it open on the table, and commenced turning over the leaves and marking passages for extracts.

"Now, Mrs. Dent," said she, "pass the paper, pen, and ink over here to me; I am ready."

"No, Juliette, my dear, if I possibly *can*, with your

assistance, I *must* do it myself. Ernest told me to do it, and it is so delightful to be of use to him that I must try. Dear Juliette, do you find and read the things out to me while I write them down, do."

"Impossible, my love! utterly impossible: You are mistaken; you do not understand it in the least. The marked passages are not all to be copied as you fancy, but some of them only to be noted, and some compared with others, and inferences drawn, and deductions made, and comments set down. You see you must let me do it all, or do it all yourself."

"Yet, dearest Juliette, if you will assist me I can do it. I will tell you in what manner. Do you read out these marked passages to me, drawing the comparisons, and making the notes and comments as you go along. In a word, dictate to me while I write. I had so much rather write it, because Ernest gave me the work to do. You can do that, Juliette."

"Yes, my love, I can do that," said the artful girl, hesitating; "that is to say, if you think it perfectly——"

"'Perfectly' what, Juliette?"

"Oh! nothing; I daresay I am too fastidious."

"Too fastidious about what, my dear?"

"Nothing. Colonel Dent has such stringent notions about what he calls 'perfect truthfulness,' 'perfect faith,' fancying duplicity where there is none intended. It is all a piece of absurdity of his. Yes, I will do the work, and you shall have the credit, and it is nobody's business but our own."

The colour now deepened in Hester's face to a burning blush. In deep humiliation she murmured,—

"I was hasty; I never looked at it, never thought of it in that light. I never dreamed of deception. I only begged your assistance."

"Of course, I know that perfectly well, my love. Nonsense! Take up your pen, and prepare to write while I dictate to you."

"No, no; oh, no, no! I could not think of it now. Go to work yourself, my best Juliette, and I shall be infinitely obliged to you."

Without another word Miss Summers drew the paper, pen, and ink toward her, and, with her finger on the first marked paragraph, commenced operations. Hester sat by her side all the time in silent admiration. There was something in the astute intellect of this girl that singularly attracted the simple mind of our Hester. At last, without looking up from her work, even while her pen was flying over the paper, Miss Summers inquired,—

"Did you look into little Julie's room just before we set out, Hester?"

"No, dear, I did not. She is in perfect health, and was sleeping when we came away; and Ernest hurried me so. Why did you ask?"

"I looked into the nursery just as I came downstairs, and I fancied, though I may have been mistaken, that the dear little one was feverish."

"Feverish!" exclaimed Hester, rising hastily, her maternal feelings taking the alarm, "feverish!"

"Yes, I thought so; it might have been fancy, but then the scarlet fever is in town, you know."

"The scarlet fever! I did not know it. Oh, heavens! how did you hear it, Juliette?"

"Mrs. General Fenton, who called while you were sick, mentioned that it was in her family."

"In her family!" exclaimed the young mother, now sick with alarm.

"My dear Hester, observe, I say that it may have been all fancy on my part, Julie's fever; but if you are uneasy return home. The carriage still waits, I presume?"

"But these minutes?"

"Oh! you cannot be of the slightest use to me, my love. I will remain here until I finish them. You can send the carriage back for me, you know."

Without hesitation and in much anxiety Hester departed.

"You will be just as likely as not to find that it was all fancy in me," said Miss Summers, as Mrs. Dent left the room.

Juliette was bending over her work, her beautiful black ringlets falling over her flushed cheeks. During the day

several gentlemen came into the library to get books, and went out again. Each one observed the gorgeously beautiful woman who appeared so absorbed in her work as to be unconscious of his coming or going. One or two of them inquired of others,—

"Who is that superb beauty writing there alone in the library?"

And would be answered,—

"I believe that is Mrs. Colonel Dent of Virginia.

Some of these whispers would reach the acute ears of Miss Summers, and her cheek would flush with a deeper glow. This was a mistake always made by strangers—the tall, finely-formed, haughty, and assured Miss Summers was always supposed to be the matron, and the delicate, simple, and retiring Hester the maiden of the party; and, under the circumstances, this was the most natural misapprehension in the world, and this still stimulated the wicked ambition of the selfish girl.

Three hours had passed since Colonel Dent had left Hester and herself in the library. She was momentarily expecting his entrance. She knew that he had concluded his speech, and that it had been crowned with brilliant success, for she heard the gentlemen who came into the library (some of them men of world-wide fame for talents), speaking in terms of enthusiastic admiration of the splendid abilities of this new senator—all of which served to intensify the desire and rivet the purpose of this unprincipled girl. Three hours had passed, and Juliette was still bending over her work. She was now quite alone. She had laid off her bonnet, and it was thus her beautiful hair, half out of curl, her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, her countenance highly intellectual with the excitement of her work, that Ernest Dent, after the adjournment of the Senate, found her. He came in, and stood looking at her in silent admiration for awhile, then walking up to her, and looking around the room, he inquired,—

"Where is Mrs. Dent, Miss Summers?"

Juliette started in well-feigned surprise.

"You here, Colonel Dent! Has the Senate adjourned already? I had no idea ——"

"I am surprised at not seeing Mrs. Dent here. Did she go into the ——?"

"She has returned home, Colonel Dent."

"Returned home, and left you here alone, Miss Summers! Why did she do that?"

"Some anxiety about the child, I believe."

"Anxiety! Was Julie indisposed when you left home?"

"Oh, no! not that we knew of."

"She was sent for, then?"

"No, Colonel Dent, she was not sent for."

"Extraordinary! How long since she left, Miss Summers, and why are you here alone?"

"She left about three hours since, Colonel Dent, and this is why I am here alone."

And Miss Summers arose and placed a roll of manuscript in Colonel Dent's hands, and then resumed her seat. He recognised the handwriting of Juliette, and retired to the window to read it. She had accomplished the task admirably, bringing all her astute intellect and brilliant wit into the service of the subject—using here the acute comment, here the skilful comparison, and here the cutting sarcasm. Colonel Dent finished reading, rolled up the manuscript, and looked at Miss Summers. The golden beams of the setting sun, streaming through the window near him, fell to the opposite side of the room upon the glorious head and face of Juliette. She was still sitting at the table, bending slightly forward, her rich purple satin dress disposed in graceful folds about her, her elbow resting on the table, her beautiful brown arm rising naked from its loose and falling sleeve of lace and satin, her hand supporting her chin, and the tips of her tapering fingers just touching her full crimson lips; her eyes were cast down, and her long black lashes sweeping her flushed cheeks; her abundant ringlets falling forward and glittering like jet in the beams of the sun, that lighted up into glowing warmth this charming picture. It was a study for an artist, a theme for a poet, a temptation for an angel, "the excess of glory" not yet "obscured." Ernest Dent approached her, stood beside her. She sat perfectly still. Her attitude and expression on a nearer view were full of

pensiveness, full of sorrow. She seemed unconscious of his presence. He spoke, and his tones were low, deep, and full.

"How shall I thank you, Miss Summers?"

She raised her eyes to his face; her dusky eyes were suffused with tears. She replied—and her voice was full of tears, and round, full-toned, and melodious as the rippling fall of water,—

"If I can deem myself so happy as to have been of any real service to you, Colonel Dent, I am richly overpaid."

Her manner electrified him. He started, looked earnestly at her. The excitements of the day, the exhilarating influence of his late political triumph, his surprise at finding Juliette alone in the library, engaged so successfully in his service, his admiration of her genius, his gratitude, his flattered self-love, the silence and loneliness of the room, and the irresistible fascinations of the Circe temporarily bereaved him of his reason. He gazed on Juliette, and as her eyelids fell, and her figure drooped away from him, the truth, or what he deemed the truth, her dazzling, bewildering falsehood, flashed down into his soul, inflaming his passions and blinding his intellect. I said her eyes and tones were full of tears, his voice and manner grave and deep, yet he felt the walls of that room expanding into infinitude; the world, with its pursuits and purposes, receded. He was alone in infinite space with his beautiful companion. He sunk down in a seat by her side, he caught her soft brown hand, and almost crushed it in his strong grasp. He pressed it to his lips and bosom, he caught up the heavy masses of her hair, and pressed them to his face, inhaling the perfume. He stole his arm around her waist, and sighed forth his whole soul in the syllables of her name, "Juliette! Juliette!"

Miss Summers arose with calm dignity. Her whole manner had changed. She, too, for an instant, had felt the earth crumbling beneath her feet, but resolved to hold a firm footing. She felt that she had ventured too near the edge of the precipice to secure her prize, and was in danger of both breaking her neck and losing her prey. She receded. Not deigning to notice the personal liberty

he had taken, except by her haughty demeanour, she raised her cold, proud eyes, and, fixing them steadily upon his face, said,—

"Colonel Dent, when gentlemen do me the honour of addressing their conversation to me they call me *Miss Summers*."

Thus she brought him suddenly to his recollection. The flush faded from his face, leaving it of an ashy paleness. A tremor shook his great strong frame. He sat down to recover himself. What a supernatural power of attraction and repulsion this dangerous woman possessed, and could wield at pleasure! She had lured her victim from his high flight of honour, integrity, and self-confidence, and now brought him hovering to her bosom; but now, when she felt his talons, with a word, a look, a gesture, she cast him beneath her feet, and his pinions, formed for soaring in heaven, were fluttering in the dust. A strong emotion, heaving and setting in a strong heart, how long before its waves subside! He recovered himself at last. He arose, and with his usual grave and stately suavity, offered to conduct Juliette to the carriage. Miss Summers declined the civility with a graceful and receding courtesy, and passed from the room before him. Arrived upon the pavement, however, she suffered him to hand her into the carriage. He did not enter the carriage after her, as she supposed he would have done. He closed the door, and, directing the coachman to take Miss Summers home, pursued his way on foot.

Juliette mused. She was not altogether satisfied with the result of her morning's scheme. She had had no intention of leading him to betray himself to this extent. This was the farthest possible from her thoughts. To win his heart in time, to obtain power over him with a view to a certain future contingency, suggested by the ill-health of Hester, was her purpose. She had no idea of the fury of the wild beast she was rousing from his lair; of the strong passion latent in that strong nature. No, *that* Miss Summers had yet to learn, notwithstanding all her stately refinement. Now, as she mused, she simply regretted that she had suffered him to betray himself. She saw that he

was suffering from self-reproach. She feared the effect of this humiliation upon his feelings toward herself. She dreaded to become associated with disagreeable reminiscences in his mind, and she resolved, if possible, to make him forget all that was unpleasant in the evening's occurrence; at least, to make him believe that she herself had forgotten it. And this purpose Miss Summers, with her exquisite tact, really effected.

Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers received cards to a *bal costumé*, to be given at the hotel of the French ambassador. As Mrs. Dent had somewhat recovered from her fatigue, and as Miss Summers was anxious to go, they determined to accept the invitations. Juliette Summers chose to appear as Night; and, upon the evening of the ball, arrayed her superb form in a flowing robe of black velvet, starred with gold, while her rich black ringlets were held back by a crescent of diamonds. Hester, as Morning, appeared in a blue satin dress, with a flowing veil of silvery gauze, confined by a single diamond star above her brow, and falling around her like a mist. "Colonel and Mrs. Dent and Miss Summers," announced the gentleman-usher, as he threw open the doors of the saloon to admit this party. Colonel Dent conducted his ladies through the whole length of the crowded room before he could find a seat for them. Their progress was accompanied by the usual half-suppressed buzz of inquiry and remark.—

"Who are they?" "Who is *she*—the lady in black velvet?" "Oh! did you not hear their names announced? Colonel Dent of Virginia, and that splendid woman on his arm is his wife."

"Which, the lady in black velvet?"

"Yes, of course."

"Who is the other lady—the little delicate girl in blue?"

"Oh! that—that is Miss—Miss—Wint—no, Summer. A poor relation, or a governess, or something; I don't know what exactly."

"Well, never mind her, she's nobody; but Mrs. Dent—*Night*, 'most glorious Night!' Oh, is she not a peerless woman? Where the deuce did Dent find her?"

"Her! Why, she was Miss Grey, of Green Vale, in Virginia. Her family is one of the most distinguished in this state."

"A most beautiful woman! Decidedly the most beautiful woman at this time in Philadelphia."

"Or in the world. I am going to get presented."

How very distinct a whisper generally is, whatever it may be intended to be. Now, every word of this whispered conversation was distinctly heard by each one of the party who formed the subject of it; and it also produced an effect upon each, and most of all upon Juliette Summers, who painfully conceived the difference of consideration bestowed upon a senator's lady and a "nobody—a Miss—Miss—Wint—Summer." Colonel Dent was *piqued* into a silent wish that Juliette had been Hester, and Hester Juliette. And Mrs. Dent, who had the most right to be offended, was simply amused at the mistake. Soon after Colonel Dent had seated his ladies and left them, the last speaker in the whispered colloquy, who was an *attaché*, met him, and said,—

"Colonel, I congratulate you with all my heart and soul. You are an enviable man. Pray present me to Mrs. Dent."

Colonel Dent took him up to Hester, and said, "Mrs. Dent, Mr. Murray wishes to make your acquaintance."

"I feel honoured by Mr. Murray's observation," said Hester, with a queer smile, making room for him by her side. It was amusing to see the young man's look of blank dismay. However, he quickly regained his self-possession, but was near losing it again in pleasure when Mrs. Dent, turning to Juliette, said,—

"Mr. Murray, this is my friend, Miss Summers, formerly of Alexandria. Juliette, my love, this is Mr. Murray, of whom you have heard Colonel Dent speak so often."

Miss Summers received Mr. Murray's obeisance with a haughty grace, that none but Miss Summers could assume. Nothing daunted, however, the young gentleman soon solicited the honour of her hand in the waltz, and led her forth. Then again the hum of admiration went through

the room; and Mrs. Dent's beauty, grace, and accomplishments, dress, and taste, and Mrs. Dent's wealth and family, were the theme of conversation. Piqued and flattered—a prey to ridiculous vexations and contradictory emotions, raised by the natural but absurd mistake of the company, and beyond measure tormented by seeing Juliette whirled around the room in a young man's arms—Colonel Dent went up to his wife and said,—

"I wish, Hester, when your friend is led back to you that you would advise her not to waltz. It really appears a dance of very questionable propriety."

"Yes, I will," said Hester; "for, indeed, I myself disapprove of it."

Juliette, however, had not been an unobservant witness of Colonel Dent's disapprobation; so she did not require a hint to give up waltzing after the first performance, especially as now a lady of great musical reputation was being led to the piano, and every one was preparing to hear her.

Mr. Murray, at the conclusion of the waltz, had led Miss Summers, at her own request, up near the piano. When the lady at the instrument had finished her list of great pieces, and had risen from her seat,—

"Do you play?" inquired Mr. Murray of Miss Summers.

"Sometimes," replied that young lady.

"Then do favour us," entreated Mr. Murray.

And the bystanders, as in politeness bound, reiterated and pressed the request. This was precisely what Juliette wanted; so, with an air of mingled hauteur and condescension, she suffered herself to be placed at the instrument, ran over the prelude, and soon her voice rose and filled the vast saloon with melody. As Mr. Murray expressed it, the air seemed shuddering with its burden of harmony.

"Who is she?" "Who is she?" whispered some of the very few who had had no opportunity of observing the beauty before that.

"Is she a professional singer?"

"Professional! Hush! She is Mrs. Colonel Dent, of The Vale, in Virginia."

In the meantime Hester sat in a distant part of the room, very weary of the scene, and almost sinking with fatigue, while Colonel Dent leaned with folded arms against the wall, regarding the group at the piano with a frowning brow. At last he walked up to his wife and said,—

"Hester, I shall hold you responsible for any evil consequences that may result to Miss Summers from her acquaintance with young Murray. He is evidently very much impressed with her; she, too, receives his attentions favourably; but he is not an eligible match for her. You, I think, officiously introduced him to her. Look to the consequences, for I shall hold you responsible."

"Dear Ernest, I am sorry. But surely no real progress can be made in winning a young lady's regard in one evening. I will speak to Juliette to-morrow."

"To-night, I say. Break it off at once. Go now and do it, or expect my serious displeasure."

"Dear Ernest, I am sick; feel my fingers, how cold they are; and put your hand on my forehead—see how hot it is."

"Sick! Why, I never saw you looking better in my life. Your cheeks are glowing. Sick! You can't be with that colour, unless, indeed, you rouge. I hope you don't rouge, Hester."

His wife replied by taking his hand and placing it against her burning cheek.

"Yes, I see it is very hot. Well, no wonder. You are every way unfit for such a scene as this, Hester. Indeed, I don't know why you should have wished to come. I should have supposed that you would have preferred staying at home with your child."

"Why, colonel," said Hester, in a manner slightly petulant, from feverish and nervous irritability, "don't you know I did want to stay at home, but you wouldn't consent to it? Don't you know that you insisted on my coming to chaperon Juliette, because she was anxious to be here?"

"So I did. Very well; then I will not insist upon your coming again, since it puts you in such a bad humour as to make you forget the commonest respect due to me."

"Dear Ernest, forgive me, if you think I spoke petulantly. I am not in a bad humour; but I am faint and feverish, and every nerve in my body seems quivering; my eyes are dim, and my head swims. Please let me go home."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Colonel Dent, with startling energy, "if there is not Juliette *tête-à-tête* with Murray in the alcove. Hester, no languishing and whining now; take my arm, and come and join them."

Hester arose, and he drew her hand through his arm, and began to wind through the crowd. Suddenly he felt Hester lean heavily against him, and, when he turned to know the reason, he saw that she had fainted. Lifting her up lightly, he retraced his steps, and found his way to an inner room, where he laid her on a couch. Others had seen her sink also, and when a few inquired,—

"Who is sick?"

"Some one has fainted—who is it?"

They replied,—

"Oh! no one. The young girl that came with the Dents."

As soon as he had laid Hester down Colonel Dent threaded his way through the crowd to seek Juliette, and, finding her, said, in a low voice,—

"Miss Summers, my wife is ill. Will you return home with us now?"

"Yes. Where is she? Take me to Hester."

When they returned to the room where Hester had been left they found their hostess, Madame ——, and a physician, who happened to be present, in attendance upon her. Hester was supported in the arms of a domestic, who, from time to time, wiped her lips with a handkerchief.

"It is only a faint from the heat of the room. She will recover soon," said Colonel Dent, coming up.

"It is a severe hemorrhage of the lungs, sir," said the

physician, pointing to the handkerchief in the hands of the domestic.

"How shall we get her home?" inquired Colonel Dent.

"She must remain just where she is, sir. To remove the young lady would kill her."

Juliette's colour came and went as she gazed upon the pale, sharp features of her friend, and she said to herself,—

"I thought so, I said so; but it has come even sooner than I thought. Strange that Colonel Dent never seemed to suspect this."

"The lady must be taken home," said Colonel Dent. "I, too, have some little medical experience, and I know this lady's constitution. I will have her taken home."

And he went out to order the carriage.

"It will kill her," said the physician.

"Indeed it will," agreed Madame ——.

"Do you think so?" inquired Juliette.

"No doubt of it, madam," said the doctor.

In twenty minutes from this Hester was laid upon her own bed. The physician, Colonel Dent, Miss Summers, Mrs. Nichols, and Minny were grouped around her. The hemorrhage had ceased, but Hester lay apparently dying. The physician held her wrist, but could scarcely detect a pulsation; and from time to time he stooped over to listen for her low and almost imperceptible breathing. As Mrs. Nichols stood next him he whispered to her,—

"Clear the room."

So she turned to Colonel Dent and said,—

"My dear colonel, you can do no good here."

And to Juliette she said,—

"Miss Summers, my love, you had best withdraw with your maid. Go with your young lady, Minny. We want silence and darkness here."

Minny had been standing at the foot of the bed, with her hands clasped tightly upon her chest, that heaved and shuddered with suppressed sobs, while silent tears overflowed her pale cheeks. Forgetting, in extreme anxiety, her usual timidity, Minny seized the hand of Mrs. Nichols, and gasped out,—

"Can she survive? Is she dying? Oh, tell me, tell me!"

"Hush, hush! We hope she is not dying. You must leave the room."

And all left the room except Mrs. Nichols and the physician.

The Dents occupied the second floor of the house, consisting of several large apartments, and one small room immediately above the front passage-way, and in front of the stair-landing. This little room had been fitted up by Colonel Dent as a small study, where he could retire to read or to prepare his speeches. To this small apartment he repaired, after leaving the bedside of his wife. Sitting down to a writing-table, he commenced revising a manuscript speech, and tried to confine his attention to the subject in vain. At last he sat back in his chair, and, covering his eyes with his hand, gave himself up to reverie. Why could he not finish his manuscript, especially as the speech was expected to be delivered in the Senate the next day? Was it the image of his pale, fading young wife, extended on her couch of suffering, perhaps of death, whom he had vowed to cherish "in sickness as in health," that drove away all thoughts of political subjects? Well, perhaps he did think of her externally and remorsefully. It could scarcely have been otherwise. But his soul was filled with one image—the image of the dark, splendid beauty, "like the bright pageant of a midnight dream," whose radiance had dazzled and bewildered him the whole evening.

What a strange and sometimes fearful element is fire! A spark falls—a foot set upon it would extinguish it; but the spark is left to ignite. It becomes a blaze—a little water would quench it; but the blaze spreads into a sheet of flame—the flame extends to a general conflagration. Many a dear homestead—the abode of industry, peace, and love; many a fair mansion—the scene of family affection and social and friendly festivity; many a council chamber—the arena of wisdom and talent, political and patriotic debate; many a humble house of prayer, and many a lofty cathedral is laid in the dust, and a city it has taken a cycle of centuries to build, in a day is reduced to ashes.

And even such a strange and fearful thing is passion. A forbidden object is seen, admired, wished for. A little government of the thoughts would correct the wish; but the object is agreeable to the imagination. It is recalled, contemplated, until the vague wish becomes a distinct and strong desire. Self-control might even now arrest the progress of the evil, but the secret image of contemplation is very dear, and to the dazzled and delirious vision of passion and imagination it has become almost sacred. The heart is the consecrated temple of worship; the idol is enshrined in its holy of holies; the thoughts are the priests that bow before it, and integrity and happiness are the sacrifice laid upon the altar. Thus the illusion that commenced with a light dalliance of imagination ends in an impetuous and irresistible passion, and the wisdom and virtue it has taken half a lifetime to acquire are in an hour destroyed by the fire of passion. Yes, a strange element is fire. A household deity when it glows upon the domestic hearth, drawing around its genial warmth the home circle; a household demon when, breaking through all restraint, it wraps that home in flames, and reduces it to ashes. And a strange element is love—that spiritual fire. A heavenly influence when it unites, pervades, and blesses a family circle; a diabolical agency when, allured beyond its legitimate bounds by a forbidden object, it endangers or consummates the destruction of family confidence, peace, and union.

How long remained Ernest Dent with his hand shutting the light from his eyes, while his mind was lost in reverie? Until imagination had inflamed the passions. And then Satan, ever ready to co-operate, sent Juliette into the room. The door had opened softly, and the subject of his thoughts stood before him ere he was aware.

"Miss Summers!" exclaimed he, in surprise. "Why, I thought you had gone to rest long ago!"

"Thought I had gone to rest, colonel? What, with one dear friend sick and suffering, and another, equally dear, anxious and watching! I saw the light in your study, and I have come to bring you news of Hester's state."

"How is she?"

"Better. She is sleeping. And now that you know this betake yourself to rest, colonel, for day is dawning, and, before the noon of this day, I believe you are expected to speak upon that bill."

"Yes," said Ernest Dent, looking at her intently; "but, Miss Summers, would you have me leave the bedside of a sick, perhaps a dying wife, to make a speech in the Senate? Would you have me do this, Juliette?"

"What would a Roman senator have done?" asked Juliette, with an irradiated countenance.

"True. You have a Roman spirit, Miss Summers. You should be a senator's wife, Juliette."

Miss Summers looked up. His eyes caught hers, and held them fixed, as the magnet holds the needle. She attempted to withdraw. He seized her wrists with his burning hands, and held them, keeping his eyes fixed upon hers with the power of the loadstone.

Juliette felt herself under the influence of a spirit and a passion even mightier than her own. She shuddered, and tried to draw her hands away. His grasp tightened. His fingers encircled her wrists like red-hot fetters; while his eyes, fixed upon her, held her in a spell.

"Juliette, I love you!"

"This is wrong. This is wicked. Let go my hands, Colonel Dent!"

"Juliette, I love you!"

"You shock me! You insult me! Release me this moment!"

"Juliette, I love you!" persisted Ernest Dent, drawing her toward him.

"You alarm me! You frighten me to death! You are mad! Let me go this instant, Colonel Dent!" exclaimed Juliette, struggling violently to free herself.

"I love you, Juliette! Love! Pshaw! that is not the word. People *love* every day. Juliette, I am delirious with the thought of you! I am mad for you, Juliette! And, come what will, I will have you, beautiful Rapture!"

"Let me go! Let me go, I say, or I will bring the

house about your ears!" exclaimed Juliette, in extreme terror.

"Bring the world about my ears! I hold your hands in mine; I am gazing in your eyes; and though the stars should fall I will not release you, or take off my gaze, beautiful Captive!"

"You are mad! Consider your obligations! Consider your prospects!" gasped Juliette, taking breath.

"I tell you, bewildering Joy, that I see but one thing in the universe; and, though the earth should roll from beneath our feet, and the heavens should recede and leave us alone in space, I would not release you! I would not be severed from you!"

"Colonel Dent, you should blush for yourself," said Miss Summers, in a tone of withering scorn. "This is ungenerous, unmanly, cruel!"

"And my love is cruel! exacting, fierce, and cruel! If I were about to die this moment, Juliette, I should kill you, lest any one else should have you. If I were condemned to eternal misery, I should try to draw your spirit down to perdition with mine, from the love I bear you!" exclaimed he, passing his arm around her waist.

Juliette darted her head down quick as lightning, and, setting her teeth in the flesh of his hand, bit it to the bone, exclaiming, as the blood spouted from the little semicircle of wounds,—

"Now, lunatic, will you release me?"

"Beautiful Vixen, no! Bite again, Juliette. I like it."

A fearful languor was stealing upon her nerves, a fearful paleness overspread her countenance. Alarmed at the influence gaining upon her, she aroused herself with an effort. She changed her tactics. Melting into a sea of tears, she murmured, in tones of sweetest, clearest melody,—

"Let me go, Ernest; pray let me go. I will come and talk to you by and by, when I am more composed. Let me go, Ernest. See, I am in your power; but you would not hurt one so weak as I am."

This subdued him. Releasing her, he said,—

"Go, Juliette! You can make me do anything! I

am your slave, your dog, Juliette! I only wish to grovel at your feet."

She gained her own apartment, and sat down to still the beating of her heart, saying to herself, "Well, well, I did not expect this. He has no more self-control than a child. Heavens! I have raised a tempest, roused a lion, fired a powder magazine, invoked a demon! What shall I do? what shall I do? With this coward heart of mine, too, succumbing too soon! Traitor heart! if you do threaten to betray me, I will tear this passion out, and cast it into the fire, sooner than it shall interfere with my ambition."

Ernest Dent sank into his chair, where she had left him, and his great chest heaved as the ocean heaves when the tide is ebbing. It is not in youth, not in the morning of life, that we are most apt to sink under the trials and temptations of life. Not in youth—life is too new, hope too strong, objects too multifarious. Not in youth—for, though we talk about the temptations of youth, yet we instinctively shrink with peculiar disgust from the young offender. Not in youth—but at that period beautifully called in Scripture, "the heat and burden of the day;" in early mid-life, about the eleven o'clock, when the ONE object of desire, whether it be of Love, Power, Fame, or Wealth, that attracts us, is discovered. When to the *one* passion (oh, let it not become the master passion!) we are in danger of sacrificing all duty, principle, affection, and faith, except faith in that. Yes! in the noon of life and passion, this is the time for valiant struggle—this is the time for hard-won, glorious victory. While your master passion is strong and fierce struggle with him, subdue him, beat him down, and lay him chained, but living, upon the altar of your God, or better—you can do better than that—win him over to the active service of your God. There is no passion, perhaps, that cannot be so converted. But do not wait until the evening, the six o'clock, when your enemy will be—not subdued, but dead upon your hands, and then offer the corpse upon the altar. No; struggle with and overcome your besetting sin while it is strong, and then what strength, what vigour! What a glorious,

what an inspiring realisation of mental and spiritual power follows the victory!—not immediately, perhaps a period of exhaustion comes first, but eventually. Our happiness has been laid in the sepulchre; but the morning of the resurrection dawns at length.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GUILTY PASSION.

"Here was a beauty that made sad the eye,
Bright, but fast fading, like a twilight sky;
The shape, so fine'y, delicately frail,
As form'd for climes unruffled by a gale;
The lustrous eye, through which look'd forth the soul,
Bright and more brightly as it near'd the goal;
The waning beauty, the funereal charms,
With which Death steals his bride into his arms."—NEW TIMON.

A WEEK passed away, during which Mrs. Dent had sufficiently recovered to appear in the parlour; and, with the elasticity of spirits belonging to her disease, declared herself to be in better, much better health than before her attack—a week, during which Colonel Dent had tried earnestly, but in vain, to obtain an interview with Miss Summers—a week, during which Juliette, with fine tact, had contrived to avoid Colonel Dent, without letting his wife perceive her avoidance—a week, during which Ernest Dent's manner to Hester had been more affectionate and solicitous than ever before, probably, perhaps, from the knowledge that her remaining days of life were to be few and painful, but mostly from the consciousness of his recent infidelity of heart toward her. At the end of this week the Dents and Miss Summers received cards to a *soirée musicale*, to be given at the house of Secretary ——.

"I wish you to go, Hester, love," said Colonel Dent. "It is five or six days off yet, and in that time you will be

sufficiently recruited. I am desirous that you should go, for Secretary —— is my friend, and Mrs. —— called here several times to inquire after you while you were ill. I wish you to go, if you appear there only a few minutes, and return."

"Oh, I am now very well able to go, colonel. I am quite recovered now."

"And, Hester—though, indeed, it seems puerile to interfere with so trivial a matter as your toilet—yet do try to dress with a little more tact. Consider the ridiculous error into which your childish appearance led people at Madame ——'s. You should imitate your friend's style of costume."

"Yes, Juliette has fine taste. But I fear it was not the dress, but the woman, that led the company into that error. Consider, dear Ernest, that your little wife has not the stature, dignity, and grace of Miss Summers."

"I suppose there was much in that."

"Yes. However, Ernest, I will dress exactly like Juliette for this concert, and then we shall see."

"What are you going to wear, Juliette, my love?" inquired Mrs. Dent of Miss Summers as the two ladies were sitting together that afternoon.

"Let me see. White blond over white satin, I think."

"And your hair?"

"I shall wear my hair in smooth, plain bands."

"Yes; but what ornament?"

"I shall have the diamonds taken out of my crescent, and arranged in a light tiara. Oh! by the way, Hester, my dearest love, will you do me a favour?"

"Why, certainly. What is it?"

"Just lend me the large brilliants in your breast-pin, earrings, and bracelets, for the central diamonds of my tiara."

"Yes, indeed, you shall have them, Juliette," said Mrs. Dent, rising and going to her casket. "There! you had better send them to Lapide at once, so that they may be set in time. You have a fine taste, Juliette. Your costume will be perfect."

"Now, love, don't think me selfish in wanting your

diamonds; but in truth you know your fortune is made, while mine is yet to be made."

"Oh! darling, don't say a word. You are quite welcome to anything I have got, except, perhaps, Ernest."

Miss Summers started violently, and looked keenly at the speaker, but the unclouded brow of Hester quite relieved her.

"What shall be your own toilet, Mrs. Dent?" inquired Miss Summers, smilingly, changing the subject.

"Oh! just precisely your own. White blond over white satin, except that in my hair I shall wear a bandeau of pearls."

Juliette's countenance fell at this announcement. She wished to be alone in the style of her dress. She hastened to say,—

"But, my dear Hester, you are too pale to wear white; you will look like a ghost. Select a *couleur de rose*."

"No, I will wear white," persisted Hester. And Juliette ceased to object.

And most dazzling and imposing was the appearance of Miss Summers on the evening of the *soirée*. The pure, rich white satin, and the light, gossamer blond that arrayed her tall, full, graceful figure, and the coronet of diamonds that surrounded her polished brow, and flashed in her jet-black hair, gave her the air of a royal bride. Mrs. Dent also looked very pretty. Her pure white dress harmonised well with her sweet, fair, spiritual face, and the pale pearls contrasted well with her smooth, brown hair. But, alack! with her slight figure, and clear, smooth, untroubled brow, she looked more girlish than ever. Notwithstanding this, however, no mistake in the persons was made upon this evening. The identity of the ladies was well known, as Miss Summers found, to her mortification; for, notwithstanding her dazzling beauty, matchless grace, perfect manner, and elegant costume, she was no longer the belle of the room.

Colonel Dent never left the side of Hester during the short time of her stay. Mr. Murray presented himself soon after their arrival, and carried Miss Summers off to the harp. Colonel Dent then led his wife up to Mrs. ——,

their hostess, and, after the usual interchange of civilities, and after leaving the proximity of the lady, he said to Hester,—

"Now, if you are fatigued, I will attend you home."

"But Juliette?"

"Never mind Miss Summers. She is engaged now; we will not disturb her. I will return for her by and by, after I have seen you safely disposed of."

Hester gladly acquiesced, and they quietly left the room. In a few minutes Mrs. Dent had retired to rest in the stillness and darkness of her own chamber, and Colonel Dent had returned to the brilliant *salon*.

"For whom are you looking, Juliette?" inquired Colonel Dent, as he observed Miss Summers looking about when the company were dispersing.

"I am in search of Mrs. Dent, colonel," replied Miss Summers, coldly.

"She has returned home, fair Juliette, and left me in charge of her friend."

"Why did you not summon me when she left, Colonel Dent? I should have greatly preferred to have gone home with her," said Miss Summers, with freezing hauteur.

"Because, Juliette, I must and will have a private conference with you. You have pertinaciously avoided me. You have given me no chance even to ask you for a private interview. If I write you return my letters unopened. If I slip a piece of paper in your hand you let it fall upon the carpet, subjecting me to the dangerous or absurd alternative of leaving it there for some one else to read, or of picking it up myself. If I come into a room and find you alone you get out of my way, as though I were a wild beast."

"You have shown yourself a wild beast, Colonel Dent."

"You shrink from me as if I carried the pestilence."

"You do carry a pestilence, Colonel Dent."

"And now I have determined to have a talk with you; so get on your cloak, Miss Summers, and come along."

"I will ride home with you, Colonel Dent, because I must, perforce; but I will not exchange one syllable with

you during our ride, so help me Heaven. exclaimed Juliette, with a fine assumption of indignation.

When they were seated in the carriage,—

"It is because you have mistaken my motive in wishing it that you have denied me an interview, Miss Summers. Juliette, I have been betrayed into an expression of passionate affection for you as unprincipled as it was impetuous. I was mad, Juliette. And now, Miss Summers, I wish to express to you my deep, sincere, heartfelt, humiliating sense of error. Miss Summers, will you pardon me?"

Juliette was silent.

"Oh! Juliette, teach me how to merit your forgiveness. What! no answer? You will not speak to me. Oh! Juliette, would you visit a hasty impulse of passion—the delirium of a moment—with the same implacable rigour with which you would punish a premeditated sin?"

Juliette persevered in silence.

"Miss Summers, we are near our own door now Do not send me to another night of wretchedness. Restore me to your friendship. Say that you forgive me, and, God helping me, I will devote myself to duty, and never while I live offend you so again. There, now, the carriage has stopped. Say now, before we enter the house, that you forgive me, Miss Summers, and I will promise, by all my hopes of heaven, to avoid you as sedulously as you have shrunk from me; for I feel the call of duty, and I will obey it, Juliette."

This was not at all what the guileful girl wanted; so, dropping her head upon his shoulder an instant, she exclaimed,—

"This is severe, Ernest! Oh, Ernest, this is severe! Would to heaven I had never seen you, Ernest!" and starting up, she alighted from the carriage without assistance, flew into the house, and up the stairs to her own room.

"She loves me! Oh, heaven, she loves me after all!" thought he, while a guilty joy thrilled to his very heart's core.

The season waned, the close of the session of Congress

approached. Colonel Dent, after having distinguished himself by making another brilliant speech in the Senate, prepared to take his family home. And in truth Hester was very anxious to return. She was very feeble. It was "the city air," she said, "only the city air." Once again in her valley home she would be strong, she knew. And little Juliette, too! She was teething, and needed the bracing air of the country. So, early in April, the family set out for the mountain vale, and by the middle of the month arrived at home. They had travelled slowly upon Mrs. Dent's account; nevertheless, Hester suffered much from fatigue, and, immediately upon their arrival, she was conveyed to her own chamber in a state of complete exhaustion.

"It is only extreme weariness, dear Ernest; only fatigue, Juliette, my love. Go down to tea, both of you. I shall be better in the morning, and will join you at breakfast to-morrow."

How delightful seemed the scene of her Eden home to Hester, as upon the morning after her arrival she sat by the open window of her bedchamber, looking out upon the green and dewy vale, the verdant hills, and the blue and mist-crowned mountains! How renovating seemed the fresh, light, soft air of morning! The sun was rising, and the golden mist rolling away before him. Golden clouds were sailing majestically up the sky. Millions of dewdrops were flashing back the light. The joyous, thrilling songs of birds were shivering the air with music. Hester's heart swelled with enjoyment as she luxuriated in this scene.

Minny came in to summon her to breakfast. Hester arose from her chair and attempted to walk, but grew faint and sank into her seat again.

"I can't go down, Minny, child. Tell Miss Summers that I have not quite recovered my strength yet, and request her to make the coffee."

Minny slowly left the room, casting back an anxious look at her mistress.

In a few minutes Colonel Dent came into the room. "Not well enough to join us at breakfast, Hester?" inquired he.

"I feel very well, only I am not strong enough yet; when I get up to walk my heart seems to sink and draw me down, and my head swims——"

"I will send for Dr. Keenan directly after breakfast, my dear," said Colonel Dent, tenderly.

"Oh, no! there is no occasion. It is only extreme fatigue. I will join you at dinner, Ernest. Oh, I feel a great deal better since I have been sitting at this window, dear Ernest. What a happiness to be at home again, and to come home in the spring, too, when everything looks so fresh, and young, and joyous! I always felt gladdened by the return of spring, and now the season is associated with the most delightful ideas. It was this time two years ago, dear Ernest, that you and I began to ride out together. I recollect that the first ride we took was up that path that winds through the woods there at the foot of the hill, and up the hill, and over the mountain. I used to be so happy then riding in silence by your side, while you were engaged for hours in your brown studies. And now the return of spring brings back the pleasures of that time, and adds them to the happiness of the present hour. Then it was spring; also *last* spring, when little Juliette was given to our love. Oh, spring is, indeed, a season rich in delicious associations for us!"

"Hester," said her husband, with something like a return of affection, or a visitation of compunction softening his heart, "Hester, love, if I were to saddle your pony this evening, don't you think you might bear to take a short ride? I will lead your horse myself, Hester."

"Thank you, dear Ernest. Yes! oh, yes! I will be glad to go. We will ask Juliette to accompany us also."

"No, no, Hester! no, no! We will not take Miss Summers this time. I want one of our old rides, Hester, such as we used to take two years ago."

"Do you, Ernest?" asked his wife, looking into his face with a pleasant smile. "Oh, I shall be so pleased! But, dear Ernest, don't look at me with so pitiful an air. Don't be uneasy about me, love; I'm very well, only

tired. But go down to breakfast now, or your coffee will be cold."

The contemplated ride was not taken; neither did Hester join her family at dinner, for her weariness increased as the day advanced, and early in the afternoon she retired to rest, assuring her husband that she was "very well, only tired," and that she should surely be down the next morning. Upon this evening Colonel Dent yielded to the alluring fascinations of Juliette's society, and from the tea-table adjourned with her to the drawing-room, where she held him enchained for hours by the thrilling melody of her voice in some of Mozart's impassioned strains. Since the hour of his first weak succumbing to impetuous passion, up to this evening, Ernest Dent had maintained a stern guard over himself, and never in a single instance lost his self-command. Juliette, by her exquisite tact and imperturbable self-possession, had aided him in this line of conduct. For policy, more than for right, Juliette wished to keep him from the brink of the precipice. Upon this evening, however, the dim sombre room, their loneliness, the impassioned music, and Juliette's irradiated countenance, altogether conspired to endanger his integrity. Raising her glance from the instrument, Juliette's eyes were caught in his earnest gaze—that powerful mesmeric gaze from whose influence she had once found it so difficult to escape. Feeling herself in the presence of a man who was fast losing his reason, Juliette arose to escape. He intercepted her. Taught by experience, Miss Summers concealed and sought to subdue her fright, and quickly determined to turn the tide of his thoughts and feelings by saying,—

"Hester is dying—do you know it, Ernest Dent?"

"I do. Go and leave me, Miss Summers."

Her words had quite subdued him.

"And there is a poor, unhappy man," thought Juliette, as she performed her night toilet; "for, between his wicked passion for my wicked self, and his compunctious affection for his fading wife, his soul is made the scene of a civil war. He can't abandon his passion, and won't abandon his integrity. Verily, a most unhappy condition.

Truly, one should be a faithful servant of God, or a thorough-going ally of the devil, to get along tolerably well in this world."

The next morning Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny, escorted by Marcus Derby, drove over to welcome the Dents home.

Mrs. Dent was not yet able to leave her room; but Miss Huldah, with the privilege of an old acquaintance, found her way upstairs to see her.

Hester was standing, supporting herself by one hand leaned upon the arm-chair by the open window, and with the other hand guiding the first tottering steps of her little girl. As soon as she saw Miss Huldah enter Hester sank into her chair, drew the child to her knee, and held out her hand to Miss Huldah, saying,—

"Oh, Miss Huldah, I am so glad to see you! Come and let me kiss your hands again, and forgive my sitting still—I am suffering from nervous exhaustion just now."

"I am very sorry to see you so sick, Mrs. Dent," said she, with a sympathetic tone and look.

"Oh, bless you, I am not sick, Miss Huldah!—not in the least—I am only exhausted from my long journey."

"You are very thin, Hester."

"Oh, you know I never *was* fleshy, and I had a slight attack of illness last winter that has pulled me down."

Miss Huldah looked at Hester with a sad smile. Hester was playing fondly with her child.

"I hope you do not nurse that little child yet, my dear?"

"O yes, I do! and that helps to account for my being so thin. There, stand down, daughter, and show the lady how you can walk. Hold out your hands to her, Miss Huldah, and she'll toddle to you," said the happy little mother, guiding her babe's steps on toward her visitor.

"Come here, Julie—is not that her name? Sit upon its old aunty's lap," said Miss Huldah, holding out her hands.

"Oh! you don't know what company this little one is to me, Miss Huldah, as I sit here all day by myself. She can chatter very well, too; but she won't call me 'Mamma.'

She hears every one call me Hester, and so she calls me 'Etty,' a saucy little limb," smiled the little mother, recalling the infant, and seating her upon her lap.

"You don't know how much pleasure I shall take in carrying on her education by and by. She can select A already from her alphabet cards. Pick out A for the lady, Julie," continued Hester, reaching a pack of picture cards from the dressing-table, and spreading them before the child.

The babe found no difficulty in selecting the only letter she knew, and handing it to the lady visitor. Miss Huldah was properly astonished at the precocity of the infant, and soon after arose to take leave, bored with the subject, most likely.

"Mr. Derby and Fanny are very anxious to see you, Mrs. Dent. Will you receive them?"

"Oh, yes! certainly. Marcus is no stranger, and Fanny, of course, has the entrée. Send them up, if you please, Miss Huldah."

And soon Fanny and Marcus came running upstairs, nearly throwing each other down in their eagerness to "see Hester," and bursting into her presence. Fanny ran and seized her around the neck, giving her a boisterous welcome back. Marcus was running on also, but checked himself in the middle of the room on seeing Mrs. Dent's altered appearance, and only gently saluted and welcomed her home, when Fanny, leaving Hester, pounced upon the babe, and was covering it with kisses.

"What a beauty! How she 's grown! Can she walk? Can she talk? How many teeth has she got? Say 'Mamma,' baby."

Surely the most exacting mother would have been amply satisfied by the amount of notice, praise, and caresses bestowed by Fanny upon the child.

Even when this interview was over Fanny insisted on taking the child down with her, saying,—

"She is tired of this room, Hester. Let me take her down into the garden. It will do her so much good."

Hester consented, and soon after Marcus and Fanny, with the babe, left the room. Hester, with delighted

heart, saw them from her window, romping in the garden walks. She also saw Marcus steal away from them, enter the house, and a few minutes after he was in her room by her side, and gazing with lachrymose countenance in her face.

"Hester, my heart is breaking to see you look this way. Hester, what is the matter? Are you going to die?"

"Indeed, I think you are all trying to persuade me that I am, Marcus, by the doleful way in which you look at me. I am worried with my journey, Marcus, that 's all."

"Are you happy, Hester?"

"I should be an ingrate if I were not, Marcus. Yes, Marcus, thank heaven, as happy as ever fell to the lot of a woman to be. Why do you ask? Now it occurs to me to say that you are impertinent in your queries, Mr. Derby," said she, smiling good-humouredly. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know. Do you like Miss Summers as well as ever, Hester?"

"More than ever. Do you, Marcus?" queried Hester, mischievously.

"No! The ——" Marcus stopped short, and bit his lips.

"Hey! What 's the matter now?" asked Hester.

"I 'm sick of her! sick of her! The perfidious ——"

"Why, Marcus, what has Juliette done to you? Repulsed some of your over-civilities, I suppose; for which I cannot, all circumstances considered, blame her at all."

"Hester," said he, suddenly, "what sort of opinion do you suppose Colonel Dent entertains of Miss Summers?"

"Why, he thought very highly of her until he went to Philadelphia. There Juliette was too gay for his taste, I believe. He disapproved of her waltzing one evening, and, perhaps, Juliette did not like the interference. At any rate, there has seemed to me to be a slight decrease of cordiality or freedom between them since. In fact, Juliette seems just perceptibly in awe of him, I think, for which I am not sorry, for it will be a wholesome restraint to Juliette's gaiety."

Marcus had been intently reading Hester's countenance while she spoke.

"And that is all, you think, Hester?"

"Certainly all, Marcus. You must not do Colonel Dent the injustice to suppose that he dislikes Juliette, because he happens to disapprove of her devotion to fashionable dissipation. O no, Marcus! Colonel Dent has Juliette's real good too much at heart. Though it is true that, at first, both as my guardian and my husband, he rather doubted the policy of what he termed my 'romantic love and extravagant plans' for Juliette, yet he did not in the least oppose them; and afterward, when he came to see and know Juliette, he heartily acquiesced in all my fondest projects for her, all except one, and that his noble nature revolted at."

"And what was that plan of yours for your friend at which 'his noble nature revolted,' if one may inquire, Hester?"

The slight hectic flush deepened to crimson on the cheeks of Hester as she answered, with a half-abashed smile,—

"You are too inquisitive, Marcus, but it was simply this. I was ambitious to marry off Juliette splendidly. Who do you think I wanted for her? The brother of an emperor, Jerome Buonaparte. Miss Patterson has got him now."

"Ah! and Colonel Dent was affected with a holy horror at your match-making propensities, Hester?" said Marcus, with a sneer.

"Marcus," replied she, seriously, "I cannot suffer you to speak in that ironical manner of Colonel Dent in my presence. To reply to your question, yes, he was shocked. I never saw him exhibit more righteous indignation. His anger exposed to me at once the error of my wishes. Marcus! Marcus! if you knew Ernest Dent as I do—if you could have seen, as I saw, his disinterested kindness, his solicitude lest Juliette, with her exquisite beauty and her ardent temperament, should form an unfortunate attachment, or contract an ineligible marriage! Oh! no, Marcus, Colonel Dent takes a deep interest in Juliette. Our little family circle is bound together by affection and confidence. Our home is an Eden of har-

mony, beauty, and love. (Open the opposite windows, Marcus; the deep shadow of the mountain makes it so dark in here now—thank you.) Yes, Marcus, when I am not well enough to go down Juliette makes his coffee for him, and gives him music all the evening. I exact that from her. But how singular that you should have fancied that there was any lack of friendship between them."

"Did I say that I thought there was any lack of friendship between them?" asked Marcus, impatiently.

"Why, yes, something of the sort; something about 'Colonel Dent's opinion of Miss Summers.' But you were at fault, Marcus."

"You are at fault, Hester."

"I am not. Who could dislike Juliette?"

"Ah! who, indeed?" said Marcus.

"Not Colonel Dent, certainly."

"By no manner of means," sneered Marcus

"Marcus," said Hester, gravely, "do not be unjust and sarcastic; you wrong your own fine nature by indulging such a propensity."

"I am not unjust or sarcastic, Hester. You totally misapprehend me. God! if I were your brother!"

"What do you mean, Marcus?"

Marcus looked into her face—her sweet, wan face—with its broad, fair brow, and its large, tender eyes, filled with so much holy faith, and through which her angel looked, forbidding him to disturb the heaven of that serene soul with the knowledge of evil. He replied,—

"Nothing, Hester. It is possible, after all, that I may have been mistaken;" and he arose and left the room.

"Indeed, you have been mistaken," said Hester, as he passed out.

She had not the slightest suspicion either of the treachery he had first intended to expose, or of the drift of his conversation; in fact, she assigned a totally opposite meaning to his innuendoes.

Miss Huldah Gales, with Fanny and Marcus, went home after dinner, having first pressed the Dents and Miss Summers to return their visit soon.

The family were all at tea below stairs. Hester was

alone where Marcus had left her. Her chair was drawn up quite to the window, her elbow rested on the window-sill, her slender hand supported her head, her expression was full of holy calm. She was looking out upon the dewy vale. The sun was setting behind the mountain, which threw a broad, black shadow across the vale and upon the house. But it was not upon the shadow she was thinking. Her mind had sunk into a sweet reverie, distantly suggested by her conversation with Marcus. Her thoughts meandered thus:—"I love where I venerate, and that is the great necessity of my life; without that I should have been wretched. I must, must venerate where I love, or I am miserable. Love married to veneration is ecstasy; love divorced from veneration is anguish. And this is in accordance with the laws of God and of nature. 'Man is head of the woman, as Christ is head of the church.' God would not have made such a law without placing corresponding instincts in the heart of woman; and, just so far as a woman's soul possesses the distinctive lineaments of her sex, does she feel the force of these instincts. Talk of woman's bondage, of woman's chains! The bondage is a bondage of protection, the chain a chain of love. The warrant of her husband's authority is written on her heart with the pen of nature, by the hand of God. They must not only change the laws of the land, but the laws of woman's nature, before they can improve upon Divine Providence by changing her relations. Talk of woman's rights! Woman's rights live in the instincts of her protector—man. Woman's subordination of love is not only a law of nature, a law of revelation, but a doctrine of all inspired books since the Bible. Shakspeare's divination of woman's nature and delineation of woman's heart are as wonderful as anything else in his godlike genius. I can conceive his general knowledge of human nature to have been obtained from observation and reflection; his knowledge of the heart of man to have been drawn from his own; but who taught him the deep secrets of woman's heart? No woman could so have revealed her deep heart to him, for generally women, *as women*, feel, they do not reflect, still less expatiate upon their deepest emotions.

Women hide their most precious treasures in the deepest recesses of their hearts. A delicate, tender, devoted, and refined woman would no more unveil the sanctuary of her soul for a poet's purpose than she would become the model of a sculptor's studio. The instincts of her sex would have to be smothered first. The world has long since discovered that 'Shakspeare was inspired.' What, indeed, but inspiration could have taught him this secret placed in the lips of Desdemona? 'His stubbornness, his checks and frowns have grace and favour in them.' And when that 'stubbornness' is the sternness of integrity, when those 'checks and frowns' are levelled at weakness and folly, what divine 'grace and favour' indeed they have! what an archangel's majesty, what an attraction for a true woman, though she herself be the victim of them! And Portia's speech to Bassanio—what woman ever read that without feeling her heart thrill with exquisite pleasure at recognising its own portrait daguerreotyped by that great sun of poetry? In Desdemona's tender submission, in Portia's generous abandonment, in Imogen's devoted loyalty, every true woman recognises her own best, sweetest instincts. It is true that women do not make set speeches, as Portia is represented to have done; they would not so reveal their hearts; they only think and feel all that Portia said. The poet spoke the woman's thought. And Milton, and Milton's Eve too, how beautifully true to nature! But I do not admire Milton with all my former enthusiasm, since I find that he has written a work advocating polygamy and defending divorce. Polygamy! Divorce! What spots upon the sun of his glory! Oh, no, no, no! I cannot admire the great luminary now as formerly. For when I am willing to give all, to lose myself, to merge my will, individuality, life, in the will, individuality, and life of another, let me at least feel that his love is undivided—that our union is eternal. And, oh!" said she, "in our case I feel that it is so; my love will outlive the stars, or if it were not so, then I should not be immortal, for love is the soul, the only soul I am conscious of."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DEATH OF HESTER.

"Leaves have their times to fall,
And flowers to wither at the north wind's breath,
And stars to set—but all—
Thou hast all seasons for thine own, O death!"—HEMANS.

TIME passed. Hester Dent's health rapidly declined. In the next month, May, she was much more feeble. It was "the spring fever," she said, "nothing but the spring fever; she had always been debilitated in the spring." Time passed. Spring ripened into summer; and then it was "the heat, the oppressive heat," that took away all her strength. She would be "better" when it grew "cooler," she said. Time passed. The frost came and nipped the flowers, blighted the grass, and stripped the trees of their foliage. Hester was confined to her bed. "It is a cold," she said, "only a cold; she was always subject to a cold in the changes of weather in the fall." Yet all the neighbours knew that Mrs. Dent lay upon her deathbed. Colonel Dent had been summoned to Washington, the new seat of government, by the meeting of Congress, and, of course, was absent from home. Hester, after a night of great suffering, and a forenoon of exhaustion and sleep, had awakened easy and cheerful, had seen her physician, and had sent word downstairs that, if Miss Huldah came, she was to be shown up into her room, as she was now well enough to receive a visitor.

"And how is Mrs. Dent to-day, Miss Summers?" inquired Miss Huldah, when she did come.

In reply Juliette took her hand and conducted her into the drawing-room, shut and bolted the door, pointed to a chair, and sank into a seat herself.

"What is the matter, Miss Summers?" inquired the old lady; "has any change for the worse occurred?"

"Yes, yes!" said Juliette. "The physician has just left me. He told me that Hester cannot recover; that she may linger a fortnight yet, but that she may sink into death to-night. He is going to write for Colonel Dent."

"Is Mrs. Dent—is poor Hester sensible of her situation, and is she prepared for the change?"

"She does not dream of it, Miss Huldah. She is talking now of joining Colonel Dent in Washington as soon as she gets well."

"Poor thing! poor young thing! To be cut off so in too early youth! to leave so many blessings, so many hopes, and to go down to the cold, dark, forgotten grave! It is an ungracious task indeed to break the truth to her; but I must do it. Show me up to her room, Miss Summers."

Juliette complied with her request, and left her just within the door of Hester's chamber.

When Mrs. Dent saw the old lady come in she held out her hand affectionately.

"How are you to-day, my dear?" said Miss Huldah.

"Exhausted by a night of pain, but very much better notwithstanding," said Hester.

"Really better, Hester, my love?"

"Yes, quite easy. Too weak to talk much, though, yet. Come, sit upon the bed by me, Miss Huldah, and talk to me. Do you know that, if the weather is fine next week, I intend to invite myself up to your house to spend a few days?"

"I should be overjoyed to see you if you are able to come, my dear."

"Oh, I shall be able to come! to ride I mean. I have not walked anywhere for six or seven months."

"Hester, my poor dear child, listen to me. Hester, have you ever thought of death?"

"Death? Yes—no—yes!" said Hester, vaguely.

"Have you ever thought of your own death, Hester?"

"I don't know—no; not often of late," said Hester, indifferently. "Please touch the bell, Miss Huldah. I wish the child brought to me."

Miss Huldah sighed deeply and complied; then reseating herself, she said,—

"Hester, my poor child, I want you to be serious. Are you prepared to die?"

"Why, no," said Hester; "not certainly as I ought to be. You have a protracted meeting at your church, haven't you, Miss Huldah? Are there many inquirers? Indeed, I know I neglect these things more than any one, especially a wife and mother ought; but next Sunday, if I live ——"

"Yes, if you live, Hester."

"I say if I live—I will ride over to church."

"Hester, you will never go to church again."

"O yes! I will, Miss Huldah, if Heaven spares me. Consider, I have been too weak to go for several weeks, but it is my full intention as soon as I get up ——"

"My poor, dear Hester, my poor, dear child, you don't understand me. Hester, you are very low, very low. Do you know it?"

The truth began to overshadow her mind slowly as night comes to earth.

"Hester, my love, are you prepared to die?"

"No, no, no! Why do you ask?" faltered she.

"Are you afraid of death, Hester?"

"Yes, yes! I'm afraid of death. What makes you ask?"

"Hester, you have lived a holy life. You should not fear death."

"But I do, Miss Huldah. What does make you question me so? You don't think that I am in danger of death, do you?"

"I think that very soon your Father will summon you to heaven, Hester; and I hope, I trust, that you will be able to obey His summons with cheerful resignation."

Hester grew very pale, pressed her fingers together, and remained silent.

The old lady then went on to talk of the purity and joy of heaven, the sin and misery of earth, &c.

Hester's face was covered with her hands, and the tears were stealing through her fingers, but she murmured,—

"It is not a 'miserable world.' It is a fair, beautiful, lovely world; a dear, good, old mother earth, and I love it—I love it; its green vales and misty hills; its bright sunshine and soft rain; and oh, besides, it contains all my treasures—all my heart's treasures!"

"Ay! 'Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also;' but heaven is a better place, my dear Hester."

"Ay, but I don't know it. It is a strange place. No one I love is there! Ernest is not there! And, oh! I tell you, Miss Huldah, where my husband is, *there* is heaven for me! Washington is my heaven now."

"But, my dear child, this is rebellious and wicked; you must not talk so."

Hester remained silent a good while, and then said,—

"Miss Huldah, is it true that I am to die soon? What does the doctor say?"

"He says, my poor child, that you *may* linger a fortnight yet."

"A fortnight—two little weeks; fourteen short days; perhaps not so long—Miss Huldah!"

"Well, my dear?"

"Have a letter written and posted at once to Colonel Dent. I would spend every remaining minute of life with him."

"Yes, I will, my dear. Don't you begin to feel a little more reconciled?"

"Oh, Miss Huldah, I don't know how I feel! Go and leave me now, Miss Huldah, please. I wish to collect my thoughts. Tell Minny she need not bring the child just yet; no, not just yet. I could not endure it. Let no one come up for an hour, Miss Huldah. I want to think—I want to think. Oh, if Ernest were only here! I want him so much."

Miss Huldah left the room.

And Hester went down into the "Valley of the Shadow of Death" alone.

The first concussion over, the first shock past, and Hester's soul settled into a profound calm. She was not prayerful. Her spirit did not move to seek the Infinite. Her soul was deeply still—encompassed, penetrated, filled

with the Infinite. In prayer the soul is active, it moves and seeks something. In meditation, passive; it lies still and receives. So it was with Hester now.

The next hour, when Miss Huldah came in, she found her young friend serene and cheerful.

"Have you sent the letter, Miss Huldah?" inquired Hester.

"The doctor has, my dear."

Then her baby was brought in and lifted up on the bed. Hester, at the sight of her child, held out her hands and burst into tears.

The infant crept up to her mother's pillow, kissed her on the eyes and on the lips, and, taking up the corner of her little apron, tried to wipe the tears from her cheeks.

"Take her down, Minny," said Miss Huldah; "don't you see she worries her mother?"

But Hester pressed her own arm around the babe, and shook her head at Minny to desist.

As the days went by Hester's life ebbed rapidly away. She grew very anxious for the arrival of Colonel Dent. Every time she awoke from sleep her first words were,—

"Has he come? Oh! has he come?"

And the answer,—

"No, not yet," was reiterated a hundred times.

"How long do you think it will be, Juliette? Dr. Keenan, how long do you think it will be?"

Their answers were always encouraging,—

"Oh! very soon; this evening, most likely."

And sometimes she would awake with the impression of some happy dream so strong upon her that she would say,—

"Juliette, dear, ask Colonel Dent to come up. I want him."

"What do you say, Hester?"

"Oh, nothing; I was dreaming. Has he come yet?"

In the meantime what delayed the coming of Colonel Dent? He had received Dr. Keenan's letter, but there was an important question coming before the Senate—a bill upon which Colonel Dent had spent much thought, for the passage of which he was extremely anxious, and

upon which he prepared an able speech. After some mental conflict Colonel Dent had determined to remain in Washington until the fate of the bill was decided.

Feeling the approach of death at last, Mrs. Dent sent for an attorney, and when he came into her room she said to him,—

"You know, Mr. Jenkins, the object that Colonel Dent and myself have so long had in view—the emancipation of our coloured people?"

"Yes, madam."

"Well, you know, also, that by a clause in my father's will we cannot do anything in it until I attain the age of twenty-one?"

"Colonel Dent has apprised me of that fact."

"Well, now to the point. I shall be twenty-one the day after to-morrow if I live. Colonel Dent is absent; so I want you to prepare deeds of manumission for all our people. Get them quite ready for signature, and bring them to me to-morrow evening. Can you do this?"

"Yes, madam; but I should apprise you that you can do nothing legally, even after you reach your majority, without your husband's presence and co-operation."

"Oh! I know that; but then Colonel Dent can do nothing at all if I die without affixing my signature to these deeds, for the property would then go to our daughter, and he would have to wait until she was of age, when many of the poor creatures whom I wish to emancipate would be dead, and others would be old. Then Colonel Dent himself might die before our daughter grows up, and Julie and her property fall into other hands, and so my poor people and their children, to remote generations, remain in slavery. Therefore draw the deeds, Mr. Jenkins, in the names of both my husband and myself; bring them to me to-morrow evening, so that I may sign them the first thing day after to-morrow. Colonel Dent can sign them at any time thereafter. Will you do this?"

The lawyer looked very much perplexed; but at length he said,—

"Yes, I will. I will do it."

"And at the same time draw up in the same manner,

that is, in the name of Colonel Dent and myself, a deed of gift of ten thousand dollars, in bank stock, to Juliette Nozzallina, by adoption Juliette Summers. And be punctual, will you, Mr. Jenkins?"

"I will bring you the papers to-morrow at eight o'clock in the evening," said the attorney, leaving the room.

Hester, very much exhausted, fell into a doze, from which she awoke to ask again in anxious tones,—

"Has he come yet? Has Ernest come yet?"

"Not yet."

Hester sighed, and renounced hope for the night.

The next day dawned. Hester was sinking fast. The day and her life waned together; evening approached—came. The night taper was lighted in her room. Miss Summers sat on one side of the bed; Minny sat on the other side rocking little Julie's crib. Hester had been lying very quiet for a long time; at last, starting up with supernatural energy, she exclaimed,—

"I hear horses' feet! I hear horses' feet! It is Ernest, it is Ernest! Take a light and run, Minny! run, Minny!"

Minny obeyed; and Mrs. Dent, leaning over the edge of the bed toward the door, strained her ears to catch the first tones of the one loved voice.

Footsteps were heard on the stairs, the door was opened, and Minny, coming in, followed by the lawyer, said,—

"It is Mr. Jenkins, ma'am, with the deeds."

Hester sank back upon the pillow in the collapse of disappointment. It is some moments, and not until Minny had given her a restorative, that Mrs. Dent could rally strength to speak to her lawyer.

"Have you brought them?"

"Yes, madam."

"Are they quite ready for signature?"

"They only require your name and Colonel Dent's signed in the presence of witnesses."

"Will Miss Summers and Minny Dozier do?"

"Miss Summers, but not the girl; she is a mulatto, I think."

"No, a quadroon."

"Well, it goes for the same in this instance. Besides, she is a slave."

"Oh! yes, I forgot; my mind wanders."

"You had better not say so, or think so, dear lady, or it will invalidate your signature."

"Would you object to remaining here all night until I sign the papers? I want you for a second witness."

"None at all; I will remain."

"Will you sit up till twelve?"

"Yes, madam."

"Minny, show Mr. Jenkins into Colonel Dent's study. Tell George to make a fire there and carry up refreshments."

Minny conducted the lawyer out, and soon returned and resumed her place by the babe's crib.

Hester sank into an uneasy doze—a slumber broken by murmurs; still,—

"Ernest, Ernest," was the subject of her dreams—the burden of her moans.

She awoke from a troubled sleep with "the one loved name" upon her lips.

"Has Ernest come, Juliette?"

"No, dear Hester, not yet."

"What o'clock is it, Juliette?"

"Ten."

"In two hours more, if Heaven spares me, the freedom of my people will be safe. My feet are very cold, Minny; so are my hands, cold and numb. Put some more cover on my feet, Minny, and rub my hands."

Minny did as desired. After awhile she said,—

"Rub harder, child; I can't feel that at all."

Minny rubbed with greater vigour.

"Minny, child, raise some of this cover off my chest; it is too heavy for me; I cannot, somehow, breathe under it."

Minny adjusted the cover and resumed her position. Hester fell off into another slumber, and in an hour awoke. She asked,—

"What o'clock is it now?"

"It wants a quarter to twelve."

"Juliette! Minny! Pick up the wick of the lamp, it is very dim, and help me up in the bed."

They did as she requested.

"Juliette, love, sit behind me, and—support me. Minny, hand me the cordial; thank you, child. There, it has revived me. Now, Minny, hand me my portfolio to write on, my inkstand, and the deeds. Now ask Mr. Jenkins to step in here. What o'clock is it?"

"It wants five minutes to twelve."

The lawyer came in. The clock struck twelve. A pen was placed in Hester Dent's hand, and, calling her two witnesses to see her do it, she affixed her signature to the papers one after another. Then the lawyer wrote his name, and Juliette hers.

"Thank Heaven, that is safe!" said Hester, sinking back on her pillow.

The lawyer went out, carrying the papers, and the room was restored to its former quiet. Night waned, but still the light of life lingered in Hester's frame. The sounds heralding in the morning began to be heard; the fluttering of fowls roosting on the trees; the crowing of chickens; the lowing of cattle; sometimes the clatter of a horse and cart; last of all, the stirring of the house-servants; then, as the light of day was stealing into the room, little Julie awoke and began to call,—

"Mamma!"

"Bring her here, Juliette; no, Minny, not you, Juliette."

Miss Summers raised the infant, and carried her to the bedside.

The babe's face broke into a glad smile as she tried to clasp her mother around the neck.

"Poor little thing! Ah, Juliette, her first thought and her first words in the morning are, 'Mamma.' Oh, Juliette! will you love her dearly?"

"Indeed I will."

"You will take care of her, I know; but, oh! love her, caress her, fondle her; that is what poor children miss when they lose their mother—not care so much as caresses,

fond looks, fond words; do not let her feel the want of these, Juliette."

Minny now removed the babe to dress her. At this moment footsteps were heard in the passage, the door was thrown open, and Ernest Dent, pale, dusty, and travel-stained, stood by the bed. With a cry of joy Hester sprang up and sank upon his bosom.

"My Hester, my dear, dear wife, do I find you thus?" groaned Dent, in the anguish of remorse.

"God bless you for coming, Ernest! Oh, I have longed for you; I 've listened, and watched, and waited—I could not compose myself to death without you! And now I hold you—oh, joy! Your arms support me—I rest upon your bosom once more, and I feel the beating of your true heart against mine! Let me look into your eyes again—those holy depths——"

"My own dear Hester—my poor, single-hearted Hester!"

"Your voice, too. Oh, Ernest! how my ear has hungered for the tones of your voice—oh, joy! God bless you for coming, Ernest! God bless you for coming!"

Colonel Dent laid her gently back upon the pillow. New life seemed to be infused into Hester. Her soul seemed no longer fluttering on the eve of flight. Her eyes were bright as stars, and her whole countenance was irradiated.

Colonel Dent took a seat by her side. Miss Summers took this opportunity to slip from the room.

"Hester, my own dear wife, will you forgive me every injury, injustice, and cruelty that I ever inflicted upon you?"

"God bless you, Ernest! May God in heaven bless you! No; I cannot forgive you, for I have nothing to forgive——"

"You have! you have! Say you forgive me, Hester."

"No, I cannot say that I forgive you, for that would be an admission that I had injuries to forgive; but I will bless you, Ernest. May God abundantly bless you; may God deal by your soul as you have dealt by my heart!"

"Hush, hush, Hester! O God! what a bitter curse!"

cried the strong man, shuddering from head to foot, and turning ashy pale. Hester looked at him with perplexed surprise. Then raising her feeble hands, she placed them around his neck, drew his head down to her bosom, and kissed him.

"Poor Ernest! the journey and the shock have been too much even for you."

"Hester, I have injured you deeply and foully. Oh! Hester, I would die to wash out that injury. Will you forgive me?"

"Listen to me, dearest Ernest—dearest husband, and I will recount some of these grievous injuries. My life was cold and dark and barren until you took me to your bosom, and since that time, for three blessed years, my life has been full of light and warmth and joy. These are your sins against me."

"Ah! Hester, I have been harsh and cruel to you sometimes."

"Oh, no! never cruel, never harsh. Stern with me sometimes, or rather, stern with my faults."

"But, Hester, my love, suppose my heart had turned away from you, and set itself upon another woman. How then?"

"Heavens! Suppose the sun had been blotted out, or the earth had rolled from beneath my feet—while we are supposing impossibilities. I don't know, but I do think, Ernest, that your defection, supposing that it could possibly have occurred, would have killed me, annihilated me, soul and body—soul and body!"

The confession that was trembling on his lips was choked back. Soon after Hester, her hand in her husband's palm, sank into a light slumber, and Colonel Dent, gently laying the little hand upon the coverlet, retired to change his dress.

Evening came. When they were undressing little Juliette, Hester said, faintly,—

"When you have done lay her by my side, upon my arm, Minny. I don't wish her put in the crib to-night."

Minny laid the infant in the bed, close by her mother's side, and was going away.

Mrs. Dent recalled her.

"Here, Minny, give me your hand. God bless you, my poor child. Try always to be a good girl, Minny, and God *will* bless you. You may go now. You needn't return again to-night. Colonel Dent will watch with me. Heaven bless you, poor child. Good night."

Minny left the room.

"Juliette, my dear, come hither. You were up all last night, Juliette. You are quite haggard. Retire to bed at once, my love, but before you go send Ernest to me; I want him. Kiss me, Juliette. Good night. God bless you, dearest Juliette."

Miss Summers went out, and soon Colonel Dent came in, and took a seat near the head of Hester's bed.

"Take hold of my hand, dear Ernest, and hold it as you did this morning until I get to sleep, and then lie down yourself, dearest, for you need rest."

Colonel Dent caressed her hair and her brow with his open hand, took her little fingers within his broad palm, spoke tenderly and soothingly to her, and bid her sleep while he watched.

One of her hands was around the babe that lay on the other side of her; her other hand was held by Ernest Dent, who sat by the bed; and so Hester sank to sleep, and only once, as in sleep, she murmured,—

"Oh! Ernest, if you knew! if I were at liberty to tell you, Ernest—but no; it would be giving too much to knowledge—leaving too little to faith."

Ernest Dent stooped over to catch her almost inaudible words, but she had relapsed into silence. Gradually her hand in his grew very cold. He slipped his fingers up upon the pulse of her wrist. The pulse was still—Hester Dent was dead.

Sinless in the midst of guilt—disinterested by the side of selfishness—faithful and confiding surrounded by perfidy—serenely resigning life in early youth,—

"She died in beauty—like the dew from flowers exhaled away;
She died in beauty—*like a star lost on the brow of day;*
She lives in glory—like night's gems set round the radiant moon;
She lives in glory—like the sun amid the blaze of June!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAWYER AND THE WIDOWER.

"Death lies on her like an untimely frost
Upon the sweetest flower of the field!"

So Hester Dent, the loving, but unloved; the gentle, yet oppressed; the confiding, though deceived, was dead at last. The low, sweet voice, whose tones were never heard but in words of sincerity and affection, was hushed; the gentle eyes, whose mild beams ever shone with the light of truth and love, were closed; the little hands, ever so busy in the service of *them*—the treacherous, who neglected and deceived her—were cold, stiff, and useless. Hester was dead—and out of the way.

Was it with any feeling of relief that the false-hearted husband contemplated his dead wife, as she lay there, with her fast stiffening arm encircling her child, who had nestled fondly to her side, its little hand straying into her cold bosom, its soft curls and rosy face, moist and glowing with healthy slumber, pressed against her marble cheek—its easy and regular breathing contrasted with her dead stillness?

Had Ernest Dent been Judas himself he could not have thrown off the burden of pain that fell upon his soul with a weight like the doom of eternal perdition. As he looked upon his dead Hester he remembered all her gentle, confiding affection; her meek and cheerful endurance of loneliness, weariness, and suffering; her unceasing, minute, detailed, yet quiet care for his comfort and happiness. He thought, too, of his own coldness and neglect, of his frequent and prolonged absences, and selfish exactions; of his falsity of heart toward her, whose whole being was his own; and he groaned under the oppressive consciousness of wrong doing.

He thought that, had he given her the care that was her

due—had he cherished her life and health with the solicitous affection that she so much desired and needed, and so well deserved—she might now have lived. Did he not regret, in anguish of soul, that this had not been the case? Reader, no. There was the point at which compunction hardened into obduracy, instead of growing into remorse, or melting into repentance. For everything that had been wrong in his conduct he felt oppressed—pained that he had stained his soul with error; but even while he contemplated that dead wife and motherless infant—that gentle and tender death-scene—he was conscious, through all his pain, of a morose satisfaction in the idea of his newly-acquired freedom. And what had wrought this change in the feelings of Ernest Dent since the morning when he had come home full of compunction for having stayed away so long, and sat by her bedside, melting into penitence at the sight of his dying Hester? Juliette Summers, his beautiful evil genius. She exercised a demoniac influence over him, and it was under the power of her spell that his heart had hardened into stone when he looked upon the death of Hester

Going around to the other side of the bed, Ernest Dent passed his hands under the infant, to raise her from the clasp of her dead mother's arm With a sigh and a smile at being disturbed, the babe half awoke, and, murmuring "Mamma," nestled close to its mother's side, laying its little curly head farther upon her chest, and nestling its little warm hand deeper into her cold bosom. Colonel Dent turned away, rang the bell, which was immediately answered by Mrs. Wimsat and Minny, and, hurrying out of the room, locked himself up in his study.

It was Minny's hands that gently released the babe from the mother's embrace—the mother's embrace that she would miss and grieve for, but never feel again—and from the mother's bosom—the soft, dear, fondly-loved bosom, that she would weep for, but never rest upon again—that she would dream of, to wake and find herself in a lonesome bed; it was Minny's voice that tenderly hushed the babe to sleep, as she bore her away from the mother whom she would never see again—whom she would miss, look for,

wonder about, and finally forget. Minny bore her little charge into Miss Summers's room, intending to pass through into her closet, to lay the babe on her own cot bed. Miss Summers heard her enter, and, opening the bed-curtains, she asked,—

"Is that you, Minny? Why didn't you come in before? I don't like leaving my chamber door open so late. Isn't it near midnight? How is Mrs. Dent? Who is with her? What is that you have got in your arms?"

"It is little Julie; her mother is dead, Miss Summers, and I have brought her to sleep with me if you have no objection, Miss Summers. She sha'n't disturb you; I'll try to keep her very quiet."

"Oh, no; I've no objection. Put her to bed at once. Dead!

Minny entered the closet with her little charge. There was no more sleep for Juliette that night. Guilty pain, that was yet not remorse, not repentance, was gnawing at her heart. Not remorse; people so seldom feel it when cursed with the fulfilment of their wicked wishes.

For the next three days Minny devoted herself to the care of little Julie, weeping when she could not satisfy or quiet the little infant's incessant and tearful coaxing to be carried "to mamma."

Hester's funeral took place upon the third day after her death. The only sincere tears that fell for her early death were shed by Minny, the poor slave girl, and by Marcus, who stood by her grave in deep mourning, trying to conceal his sorrow by holding his hat before his eyes.

After returning from the funeral Miss Huldah Gales invited Juliette to return home with herself and Fanny, saying,—

"I promised Mrs. Dent that I would try to supply her place to you until you should fix upon some future plan of life. Ah! Miss Summers, we have had a great loss; I and you, the family, and the whole neighbourhood. We now know that 'an angel has sojourned with us,' for we have seen 'the glory of her vanishing wing.'"

Juliette readily accepted the invitation, and retired to prepare for her journey. Meeting Colonel Dent as she was returning, dressed for her ride, he inquired,—

"Where are you going, Miss Summers?"

"Home with Miss Huldah."

"Don't go to-night, Juliette. I am wretched, and it is by and through you that I am so wretched. Satan himself wouldn't wish a human being more misery. Remain to bear me company this evening, Juliette. I shall return to Washington to-morrow myself."

Juliette had little fear of sin, but a great horror of "social mistake," so she answered, gently, however,—

"You must be aware, Colonel Dent, that I cannot accept your hospitality, even for a night," and she passed on.

Early the next morning Colonel Dent was closeted with Mr. Jenkins, the lawyer. A great many small packets were strewed over the table between them, the deeds of manumission poor Hester had signed on the last day of her life.

"They are invalid I tell you, Mr. Jenkins—good for nothing; they could not pass in any court of law," said Colonel Dent, who knew far more of law than the petty lawyer by his side; "they are full of flaws ——"

"They were drawn up in haste, sir."

"If they had been drawn up with the utmost legal precision other causes would have invalidated the deeds, not among the least of which is the fact that Mrs Dent had not attained her majority when she signed them, or even, indeed, when she died."

"How! what!" exclaimed the astonished lawyer.

"It is very simple, sir. Hester Grey was born at ten o'clock, P.M., on the — day of December, 1782, the day upon which peace was proclaimed; and Hester Dent affixed her signature to these papers at twelve o'clock, and died at seven o'clock, P.M., on the twenty-first anniversary of her birthday, so that she really wanted twenty-two hours of her majority at the hour that she signed these deeds."

"You are well assured of that, I presume, sir?"

"I was in camp with her father at the time of his receiving the letter announcing the fact. We, with our brother officers, were celebrating, over a dozen or so of champagne, the cessation of hostilities."

"You an officer at that time, sir! Why, you must have been quite a youth—a boy, in fact."

"I was twenty-four years of age."

"Is it possible? I had not supposed there had been that disparity between your age and that of Mrs. Dent;" and the lawyer looked up with a smiling expression, that seemed to say,—

"You are a devilish fine-looking man for your age, colonel."

Colonel Dent bowed gravely.

"Then what disposition shall I make of the deeds?"

"Put them into the fire if you feel disposed, sir."

"They employed myself and two clerks half a day to draw them up," sighed the lawyer lugubriously.

"Pay yourself, Mr. Jenkins, and when you have done so return the book to me," said Colonel Dent, laying his pocket-book on the table, and leaving the room.

An hour from this time Ernest Dent found himself on the road to Washington. Colonel Dent reached the city just one week after leaving it, and immediately threw himself into the vortex of political strife. Very much was Ernest Dent admired for the fortitude and energy with which he entered upon the field of political conflict so soon after his "heavy bereavement." Yes, for just one week he had left the exciting scenes of the Capitol, had hurried to his quiet home in the Vale, had received the last sighs of his wife, and was back again. Everything in the city was so unchanged that, but for the suit of black, he might have looked upon the events of the last week as only a gloomy dream.

Yes, there was another thing—the return of the post-day that brought him no letters from home.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WAVERING LOVER.

"Nay, but this dotage of our general's
O'erflows the measure."—ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

"There is a pleasure in being mad,
That none but madmen know."—DRYDEN.

You have doubtless heard the story of that clever artist who painted a monster the image of nothing that is in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. You have heard how, seeing his failure in the portraiture, he was constrained to write under the monster the name of the intended animal; how, his chirography being quite as bad as his painting, he was lastly compelled to walk up to the picture, and, placing his finger upon the mysterious hieroglyphics under the supernatural beast, enlighten his audience by reading, "This is a horse!" Yet you have not charged the monstrosity of the sketch upon the living model, but upon the unskilful artist.

Well, the people with whose history I have been trying to amuse you really "lived and moved, and had their being;" really loved, and sinned, and suffered in this veritable world of ours.

But their portraits, with which you are presented, are, it is to be feared, somewhat distorted by the haste with which they are drawn.

Of Juliette Summers I could not have spoken in language too strong. I know I have failed in portraying the power of the strange fascination this beautiful and dangerous woman possessed over all she approached. I have often thought that had she lived long in one of the courts of Europe, near the person of any reigning monarch, she would have ruled the nation, or overturned the government. Yet there had been a time, not five years before,

when Juliette Summers had been innocent, guileless, and disinterested.

In thinking of her character I think of the "excess of glory obscured," of "Lucifer, son of the morning," whose favourite daughter she was. I call her the Incarnation of the Beauty of Evil. In thinking of her, in relation to Ernest Dent, I am reminded of the messenger sent to buffet the apostle, of the beautiful fiend commissioned to tempt the saint. You cannot abhor Juliette the temptress too much; yet, if you had fallen into her company, you would have been fascinated, charmed, mesmerised.

And Ernest Dent, her dupe and victim, does he appear to you to be an arrogant selfish, and self-righteous hypocrite?

If so, it is because I have drawn his portrait of charcoal, or rather, through haste, I have given his actions without explanation.

Ernest Dent, at the time of falling into the power of this dangerous beauty, was, in some respects, almost as unsophisticated as Hester herself. Living a simple, reclusé, pastoral life with his father, among the people whose welfare was the one object and interest of his life, entirely cut off from female society, his naturally strong but dormant passions had never been aroused up to the time of his meeting with Juliette Summers. His soul resembled a deep, calm sea. His love for Hester had pleasantly agitated the surface of the waters like a sweet south breeze. His passion for Juliette had troubled the deeps of his soul, had lashed that sea into a furious tempest.

Ernest Dent was no hypocrite, but a self-confident and self-deceived man. With the theory of a stern morality ever in his ears and on his tongue, with the practice of a stern morality habitually and externally in his life, he believed its spirit to be in his heart as well. "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" is as much the language of untried integrity now as it was three thousand years ago.

An adept in physical science, a master in national policy, Ernest Dent was yet a tyro in the knowledge of human nature, ay, even of his own nature, so that he fell

an easy victim to the arts of a woman like Juliette Summers.

Miss Summers was domiciliated with Miss Huldah Gales and Fanny. Having nothing on earth to amuse herself withal, she turned her evil "eyes, that could not cease from sinning," upon Marcus.

Mr. Derby's handsome black eyebrows sat upon a ridge, a cliff, a peak. His perceptive faculties were sharply developed: he was not easily duped. But now he had no common antagonist. At the end of a fortnight all his foregone conclusions were dissipated, all his prejudices shaken. At the end of a month he was completely bewitched, bewildered, bedeviled, victimised; and it took Juliette Summers, with her sweet, clear, mellifluous voice, and midnight eyes and mesmerising manners, to do it thoroughly.

One morning, when Miss Summers had been a guest at Rock Spring about six weeks, Fanny Gales came running into her aunt's room, and, throwing herself into a chair, burst into tears, and exclaimed,—

"Aunt Huldah! dear Aunt Huldah! I am perfectly miserable, and I wish I were dead!"

The old lady dropped her knitting, adjusted her spectacles, and looked steadily and reprovingly at her niece.

"Yes, I do! I do so wish it! Marcus does not care for me now. He is all the time with Juliette. All the time! Oh, dear!" sobbing. "I wish I could die and break his heart; I do so."

"My dear child! My poor Fanny!" said the old lady, tenderly. "You are jealous; you should not be jealous."

"A saint would be jealous! an angel would! to see the way in which he acts. He treats me as indifferently as possible. It is often, 'Fanny, get out of my way;' and 'Fanny, don't bother me;' and 'Fanny, please to let me alone, I want to fix this for Miss Summers;' and often, when we are sitting together, he will get up, and, yawning in my face, ask me, 'Fanny, where is Miss Summers?' take his hat, and leave the room. He does not seem to think it worth while to disguise his sentiments toward Miss Summers, even to save my feelings."

"O Fanny, my dear, how 'green-eyed' you do look at things! Why, by your own account, the very openness of his attentions, of which you complain, shows that there is no consciousness of infidelity in him. Oh, no, Fanny; these are only the civilities due to her as a woman, an orphan, and our guest."

"Dear Aunt Huldah, you sit mewed up here all day, and you do not see! If you only knew! What do you suppose, for instance, that they are doing now? Why, Juliette is sitting at the piano, playing, and Marcus is bending over her, and both are singing that impassioned love song of Mozart, 'Am I not fondly thine own?' You should hear Juliette. She sung as if her heart gushed through every tone; and you should have seen Marcus when they came to the words,—

'Then! then! e'en as I love thee,
Say! say! wilt thou love me?'

You should have seen Marcus. He actually sunk upon his knees at her side, gazing up into her face with a look of such adoration! such worship! Oh! I wish I was in heaven; I do so!"

"Where were you when this was going on, Miss Fanny?"

"I?" said Fanny, blushing deeply; "peeping through the chink of the folding doors."

"Wrong, Fanny."

The old lady mused a good while. Fanny sat sobbing and sighing. At last she said,—

"What shall I do, Aunt Huldah?"

"Fanny, my dear, the Scriptures are a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path—a sure guide in every possible emergency. Consult them always, Fanny."

"But, dear Aunt Huldah, in this case ——"

"Get your Bible, and turn to Matthew, 18th chapter and 15th verse, and read."

Fanny took down the Bible, and, more from curiosity to see what it would say upon the subject than from any other motive, turned to the text in question, and read,—

"If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

"That is the best way," said the old lady, seriously. "Ah! if people would always do so, many a heart that is withering under a sense of injustice and suspicion would rejoice thus to be put upon its trial—would rejoice to be treated with the fair dealing extended to a felon, instead of being condemned and sentenced unheard.

"Go to Marcus and tell him what annoys you. You are his betrothed. The scene you witnessed just now might have been the mere impulse of an emotion—the effect of the music and poetry. You must not expect too much of human nature, Fanny. And oh! Fanny, of all things do not cultivate jealousy. Jealousy never prevents, but frequently suggests, the very infidelity that it fears."

Fanny bathed her eyes, smoothed her curls, adjusted her dress, and went in search of Marcus. It was a beautiful morning for the season. Several "hands" were in the garden, doing up the flower-beds. Miss Summers was superintending one of them. Marcus was in the small closet opening on the piazza, in which dried herbs, flower seeds, and roots, and such things, were kept. He seemed to be very busy among the bulbouses. Fanny went up to him, and, being at an utter loss how to proceed in arraigning her culprit, and reading the indictment, she stood some time in silence by his side. He was too much occupied to notice her. At last, impatient at herself as well as at him, she tossed her pretty head, with all its golden curls, and said,—

"I have a crow to pick with you, Mr. Marcus. I have so—one of the blackest of crows; so come along, and sit down on the bench, and help me to pick it."

"Oh, Fanny, don't bother! I'm busy," said Marcus, assorting some tulip roots.

"And always are! But, Marcus, I must and will have a talk with you—so there! Come, now! I won't be put off."

"Well, talk fast; for I want to set out some tulips and double hyacinth roots for Miss Summers," said Marcus, as impatiently sitting himself down, and spreading a handkerchief over his knees, he commenced intently selecting and assorting the roots, talking all the time:—

"Let 's see; double white; talk on, Fanny; double carnation; rainbow tulip; do make haste, Fanny; I 'm in a hurry; double pink ——"

"Double tongue! double heart! double dealer!" exclaimed Fanny, thoroughly exasperated.

"Hey! What 's the matter now? What 's put you out, Fanny?" exclaimed Marcus, suddenly waking up. "Has the sponge cake burned? has the custard curdled? have last year's preserves fermented, or what?"

By this time Fanny's cheek was flushed to crimson, and her eyes were flashing fire, as, with a proud and scornful air, she drew a ring from her finger, and, holding it out toward him, said,—

"Only this, Mr. Derby. About a year ago you did me the honour of placing this little ring upon my finger, raving at the same time about eternal love and truth. You promised more than you could perform, sir! Take back your ring and pledge!"

Casting the ring upon the ground, she turned and entered the house.

"I 'll sue you for a breach of marriage promise," shouted Marcus after her, as he picked up the ring; "fetch me if I don't!"

With all his foibles Marcus was conscientious. He had been following a blind impulse all this time. He was brought up all standing by this short interview with Fanny. He followed her into the house, but she had taken shelter in Aunt Huldah's room. He scratched his head, and thumped his forehead; he "pshawed" and grumbled, and finally saddled his horse and rode off to the post-office—a frequent resort of Marcus in times of trouble or of ennui. He did not return that morning.

The family sat down to dinner. Miss Huldah was grave; Fanny indignant. Juliette seemed the only cheerful, easy, and self-possessed member of the party. But was Juliette really cheerful? She might have been, for any compunction that she now felt for her perfidy, either to Hester or to Fanny. But Miss Summers had grave causes of anxiety. She had been advised by Mr. Jenkins that Hester Dent's deed of gift of ten thousand dollars to

her was null and void. The last eagle was changed in her purse; her wardrobe, her magazine of artillery, sadly in want of replenishment; the days of her visit dwindling to the shortest span, and no arrangement made for her future; her utter abhorrence of being a governess; her tormenting doubts of her lover's constancy; her fears lest, while removed from her spell, he should be attracted by some beauty in Washington, who should finally supplant her in his heart—these drove sleep from her pillow at night, and peace from her mind by day. And her sentiment for Ernest Dent, that had been a queer mixture of superficial admiration, of vanity and ambition, was now, by the pressure of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, deepening into a passion—a selfish and calculating passion, it is true; for she regarded Colonel Dent as the only being able and willing to raise her to the rank to which she aspired; invest her with the wealth that she coveted, and supply her with the elegancies, luxuries, and attendance that habit had rendered indispensable to her comfort, and she adored him accordingly.

That very evening, as Miss Summers was seated alone in the parlour, a servant opened the door, and named,—

"Colonel Dent!"

And in another moment Ernest Dent was standing before her, holding both her hands, gazing into her eyes. He spoke no word, but that impassioned gaze was eloquent. She, too, was still and silent. She felt her strength all going. He seemed to have the spell to wile it from her. No other man on earth possessed this power over her. Still holding her hands, and gazing on her face as if every sense were rapt in ecstasy, at length he spoke,—

"My Juliette!"

Oh! the tenderness, pathos, and passion with which he uttered that one word "Juliette!" His tongue lingered on the name, as though the letters syllabled a sound conveying more of joy and of poetry than any form of letters could. He sank into a seat by her side; he passed his arm around her waist, and drew her graceful head, with all its soft, black, shining ringlets, down upon his bosom, gazing into her eyes, and murmuring under his breath,—

"Most beautiful! Most beautiful! Vision of joy! Do I hold you to my heart at last?"

And Juliette! she had whispered one word, "Ernest!" and her eyes had closed, as under a spell of mesmerism, when he drew her upon his bosom, and imprinted kiss after kiss upon her glowing lips, exclaiming the while, in low, earnest tones,—

"My star! my beauty! my life! my hope! my joy! my dream of heaven—Juliette!"

Thus his tongue luxuriated on her very name. He was delirious, reader; and no wonder, when the lightest tone of Juliette's voice had power to stop the blood in his heart, or send it flying through his veins; when the lightest glance of Juliette's eyes, meeting his own, had a spell to arrest the course of memory and thought in his brain; when the softest touch of Juliette's hand was like a galvanic battery on his nerves, except in this, that the shock was ecstasy!

"Dearest Ernest, I feared you had forgotten me," whispered Juliette, after a few moments.

"Forgotten you, my bird of heaven! forgotten you! Why, I have forgotten everything else!"

And he strained her to his bosom, and kissed her passionately again. I do not know how long he held her thus; I do not know how high his delirium reached, but,—

"My bright, bright Juliette!" at length he said, "I have a mission to Paris. I shall sail in a month. I cannot leave you behind. You must go with me. 'My Queen of Beauty and of Love,' you will go. Speak, and tell me that you will."

"But this is sudden, dearest Ernest, and I—I am bewildered with this surprise."

"My Juliette! I manœuvred to get this appointment for the very purpose of having an excuse to hurry our marriage. I stooped to this for your sweet sake, Juliette. For myself, without this, I would have gathered you to my bosom in the face of the whole world; but for you, my cherished love! I would not have the slightest breath of censure soil the plumage of my bird of heaven!"

She smiled, and attempted to lift her head from his bosom. He drew the graceful form closer within his arms, and rested the beautiful face against his bosom. She raised her eyes to his countenance. His eyes were riveted upon her. Her eyelids fell beneath his gaze. She was mesmerised again while he pressed impassioned kisses upon her forehead, lips, and eyes, exclaiming all the while,—

"This is joy! this is rapture! this is ecstasy! this is heaven, Juliette!"

He was scarcely a responsible moral agent. He was insane—a monomaniac—a man with one idea—Juliette.

Enough of this scene. Before the close of it he had received her promise to become his wife within three weeks.

CHAPTER XV

THE ORPHAN BABE.

"The tear down childhood's cheek that flows
Is like the dewdrop on the rose;
When next the summer breeze comes by,
And waves the bush, the flower is dry."—Scott.

In the meantime, while this scene was going on in the parlour, Fanny, having asserted and vindicated her dignity again and again to Marcus, had betaken herself immediately after dinner to her Aunt Huldah's room, where she sat sulking, pouting, and—yes, weeping, though she would not admit it to herself, even by wiping away the gathering tears. Presently she heard slow, hesitating steps coming up the stairs, and Marcus entered the room with a deprecating air for the third or fourth time since the quarrel.

Fanny turned and looked out of the window to conceal her red eyes. This gesture looked so much like anger that Marcus hastened to say,—

"Suffer me one moment! I will not intrude upon you

long, Miss Fanny. I merely returned to say that, however free you may consider yourself to be, *I* shall hold myself bound by our engagement, and shall never certainly address any young lady while you are unmarried, Fanny; and this I have come to tell you, because somehow I thought I ought to, even at the risk of your contempt. Now, good-by, dearest Fanny; we will part friends, will we not?"

Fanny had rejected all overtures for peace three times that afternoon, but now she turned, "with a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye," and held out both hands. Marcus caught them, rapturously exclaiming,—

"Ah! that's my dear, sweet little Fanny! that's my forgiving little lamb! Dear pet, I can't bear to be out with you; I can't indeed, you may take my word for it. I have been perfectly miserable to-day."

"Well, then, what makes you serve me so?" said Fanny.

"Let me sit down, darling, and I will make a confession; but first hold out your finger—let me encircle it with this little ring again. There! now we stand upon our old footing again, don't we?"

"Yes, though you don't deserve it."

"I know I don't," said Marcus with humility. "Well, about Miss Summers, Fanny. Fetch me if she don't bewitch me; she does indeed, Fanny; you may take my word for it ——"

"There! you needn't swear to it; I have no difficulty in believing it, Marcus."

"You may say that; but mind, when I'm out of her company the spell is off, and now I shall keep out of it. Heaven bless you, Fanny! I'm going to tell you how it used to be with me; it shall be so no longer. Sometimes I would enter the parlour, where you would all be sitting, and without noticing any one, except by a general bow, I would take my seat, really without knowing who was in the room, and presently feel myself being turned around as upon a pivot, and stopped; then looking up, I would find myself facing Miss Summers, would meet her eyes, and then—it was a gone case. I could no more help rising, crossing the room, and taking a seat by her side, than—than the needle can help following the magnet.

And this has occurred every time I have entered a room where Juliette has been."

Pleasant truths these to tell his lady-love, were they not?

"Oh! you were in love with her," said Fanny, growing sick.

"No; bedeviled, darling, bedeviled! Well, sometimes we would be talking together quite trivially, when suddenly down would swoop her heavy eyelids, with a look—oh, Belial!" exclaimed Marcus, drawing in his breath hardly between his teeth, "it would take away all my strength; it would stop my heart beating; it would bereave me of my senses; my brain would reel——"

"Oh, Marcus!"

"That is not all; I am in the confessional, little Father Confessor; you must hear me out. Well, this morning, this very morning, she was seated at the piano, singing and playing; I was hanging over her chair, accompanying her with my voice, and drinking in the sound of her mellifluous tunes, until I became intoxicated, crazy, delirious! What with the music, and the poetry, and the passion, and the sentiment, and Juliette, I became rapt, entranced, beatified! That was when the notes were ascending. Presently the notes came down, thrilling and quavering, and at the same time Juliette turned her tender, brooding eyes on me, and I—I collapsed, melted, sunk at her feet, and said—the devil only knows what I did say, and what I didn't."

"What did she say?" asked Fanny, in a sinking voice.

"She! her whole aspect changed. Regarding me an instant with a look of ineffable and lofty disdain, she murmured, in a low tone, 'Audacious!' and, rising slowly, withdrew from the room. There was no hurry, no agitation, no anger; her manner was cool, self-possessed, and insolent. It brought me quite to my senses all of a sudden. Plague take her! to lure a fellow on to make a donkey of himself, and then to laugh at him! I would not give my simple, honest little Fanny for twenty of her. And never mind, Fanny, I am all right now; fetch me if I am not."

Fanny fell into deep thought for a few moments, and then she said,—

"I have promised to give you my hand, Marcus, but I will not do it hastily after what you have said. For both our sakes, we must delay this matter until you know your heart and mine somewhat better than you appear to know them now. Not this month, nor this year, will I marry you, Marcus."

Fanny Gales said this in a sad, serious, and very earnest manner. Marcus expostulated, disputed, opposed, and quarrelled with this decision, but at the end of half an hour left Fanny, with the full and sad assurance that she meant to keep her word.

"There is nothing," thought Marcus, "in life for galvanising into new vigour a hypochondriacal love that fancies itself dying like a good quarrel—so that it is a good one, and comes but once or twice at long intervals. It is the drizzling small rain and east wind of peevishness and selfishness that throw love into a real consumption: but a good rousing quarrel, a good boreas of a blustering blow-up, a fine sublime storm of thunder and lightning, how it does clear off the atmosphere. All the lurking poisonous vapours, all the concealed but irritating grievances are cast up and cleared off, brought to light and got rid of; and then how warm and bright comes out the sun of affection—how sweet the reconciliation! Mind, I am not recommending these things; I am not saying that they are right—I am only saying that they are. These storms, passionate or atmospheric, are dangerous, highly dangerous; lives are sometimes lost and wild ruin spread by them; but they are natural and necessary, especially to torrid climes and torrid natures—evil and good are so blended in everything. Mr. and Mrs. Bland, with their phlegmatic temperaments, may exist together a long life, a calm intellectual life, or a dull inane life, and their faces may be as smooth, and their hair as glossy, at fifty as at five-and-twenty; yet there is no computing the amount of ennui they have suffered; while 'Gusty Wilde and his wife have loved ardently, quarrelled fiercely, enjoyed keenly, suffered intensely, in short, have lived. Most folks would call the one domestic misery and the other wedded bliss; yet I fancy the balance of happiness more evenly poised

than hasty observers would suppose. And that is the reason I have no patience with legislatures who grant people the divorce they have applied for in a white heat, giving them the trouble of remarrying. I should wonder if they did not divorce the same couple twenty times in a lifetime. When I get into the legislature these things shall be amended."

"To Paris!" exclaimed Juliette Summers to herself, as she retired to her own room, after her meeting and parting with Ernest Dent. "To Paris—to the gayest, most elegant, and most refined capital in the world! to the French court, and as Madame l'Ambassadrice too!—to the French court, to be present at the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine!" Why, here was a concentrated focus of glories she had never dreamed of in her wildest visions. Juliette, who had caused other people's heads to reel so often, was now dizzy herself. Should she, she asked herself, for a mere conventionality, a mere point of time, deny herself all this? No, indeed; it was not to be thought of. She dreaded, however, to announce her approaching marriage to Miss Huldah, nor could she bring herself to do it for several days. The old lady received the news very quietly. "It was sudden," she said, "very sudden and unexpected, and under ordinary circumstances quite too early for Colonel Dent to think of such a thing;" but then, as he was going away, why it made a difference. Afterward she remarked to Fanny, that Colonel Dent had really shown a regard for Hester's memory by selecting her cherished friend as his companion. She had no doubt, she said, that was the very reason of his thinking of Miss Summers, since it was plain that this was a marriage of convenience on both sides, "for it could not be love so soon, you know, Fanny." Marcus received the news of the contemplated marriage with indignation.

In the meantime Miss Summers was making preparations for her wedding and her voyage. Colonel Dent had been lavish of costly presents; but we have no sympathy with their joy, dear reader, and we will go and visit poor little Julie, our Hester's forgotten child, whom we have not seen for so long.

A few days after his first interview with Miss Summers Colonel Dent rode over to the Vale. His business was to procure a casket of jewels, to have them sent to New York to be reset. Having procured the keys of Hester's apartment, he went upstairs, accompanied by Mrs. Wimsat. Holding on to the balustrades, and climbing up the stairs after them, came a little pale child. No one observed her. Arrived at the chamber door, Colonel Dent turned the key in the lock, and went in. It was the same room, and there stood the same bed upon which Hester had died. He had never entered this room since he left it, the night of her death. He shuddered slightly—perhaps it was with the cold. Whatever might have been his emotions he did not pause, but walked up quickly to the bureau and unlocked it. Finding the casket, he opened it, and began to examine, select, and assort the jewellery. In the meantime Mrs. Wimsat sat down in Hester's large easy chair.

The little child, with its faltering steps, had now reached the chamber door, and was standing in it, looking—she had never seen the room since her mother's death—looking first with eager curiosity, and next with awakened recollection, at the scene. Suddenly her eyes lighted on a pair of small slippers that were peeping out from under the valance of the bed. Running towards them with gleeful face and extended arms, the infant seized the little shoes, and, hugging them up tightly to her bosom, exclaimed, in glad tones,—

"Mamma! Etty! Mamma!"

And then she toddled around the room, renewing her acquaintance with every long-lost familiar object in it. She found her mother's sun-bonnet, and, exclaiming "Mamma!" hugged it up with the shoes, and so with her sewing-apron, and so with her gloves, until she had got her arms full; then running gleefully up to Mrs. Wimsat, she put them all in the old lady's lap.

And then the little one, with a shade of anxiety on her face, commenced an earnest search. She toddled up to the bed, and, pulling the curtains open with an arch smile, exclaimed,—

"Peep!"

Then a shade of disappointment stole over her face. It was quickly dispelled, however, when her glance fell upon the door, opened back against the corner. Her whole countenance lighted up, as at the sight of a well-remembered object, suggesting a well-remembered game. Running with extended arms and joyous smile, she pulled the door back from the corner, exclaiming archly,—

"Peep, mamma!"

Suddenly her little face sank—fell into a look of deep grief. Bursting into tears, she ran up to Mrs. Wimsat, and burying her face in the old lady's lap, gasped, in one heart-bursting sob,—

"All gone!"

The child of two years old had few words. Poor little one! Memory and association had invoked the past, and almost brought the dead to life for her; but whatever eager hope and expectation, or sorrowful disappointment, had troubled her infant bosom, it was unknown; the child of two years old had few words.

"What is the matter with her, Mrs. Wimsat?" said Colonel Dent, approaching, and throwing over the infant's neck a necklace of coral, for the purpose of amusing her.

"Indeed I do not know, sir, unless she is fretting after Minny."

"By the way, Mrs. Wimsat, I am glad you remind me of Minny," taking out his pocket-book, and placing it in the old lady's hands. "I wish you to take Minny to the village to-day or to-morrow, and fit her out with everything proper for a lady's maid for a long sea voyage. I wish her to be in readiness to enter upon the lady's service upon the first of next month."

"Dear me, Colonel Dent: It is no affair of mine, sir; but indeed, indeed, I *do* hope you are not thinking of selling Minny!"

"Selling Minny! Why, what suggested that idea, my good woman? Of course not. She has been accustomed to attend upon Miss Summers, and I shall take her with us to France."

"Miss Summers! Oh! Yes—I—beg pardon—I did not understand," exclaimed the old lady, as the truth for

the first time flashed on her mind. Then she said, "Excuse me, Colonel Dent, but is it your purpose to take little Julie also?"

"Certainly not, Mrs. Wimsat. As we shall be absent but six or eight months I shall leave her in your charge, feeling sure that I could not intrust her to better care."

"I will do my best, sir; but I hope to persuade you, Colonel Dent, to leave Minny with your little daughter. Believe me, she will need a younger pair of feet than mine to follow her little steps about."

"Then take one of the girls from the plantation; take Kitty or Harriet."

"Oh! sir, Kitty or Harriet won't do. They dislike the child; all the coloured people do, although it is not like coloured people to do so; but they have been so bitter, and grumbled so much since their young mistress's death."

"Grumbled!"

"Yes, sir, grumbled. They say that Mrs. Dent loved her child better than she loved right and justice. They complain that she broke her promise; and, instead of setting them free, has left them all, with their children, and their children's children, for ever and hopelessly enslaved. And they dislike the child, as the supposed cause of their misfortune. It is very unjust, but you must allow for their disappointment, Colonel Dent."

"Poor Hester!" said Ernest Dent, struck with the injustice attached to her memory. "Poor Hester! I must disabuse them of this idea."

"You will leave Minny with Julie, then, sir?"

"No. You must hire some one. Miss Summers has expressed a wish for Minny, and most certainly she must not be disappointed."

"Look at your little daughter, Colonel Dent."

The babe was lying on Mrs. Wimsat's lap, her head laid against the old lady's bosom, and her large eyes fixed upon her father's countenance.

"Look at her, sir! See how pale and wan she is. She has pined away ever since her mother died. She would have been dead, too, if it had not been for Minny. Minny is devoted to her. I never saw a mother more devoted to

her child than Minny is to this baby. Little Julie sleeps with her; has slept with her ever since her mother died. She is sickly and fretful, and sleeps very little. I often hear Minny walking the floor with her, singing her to sleep, half the night.

Ernest Dent took hold of the little one's feverish hand, and looked down into her pale face, with a great deal of tenderness expressed in his countenance, and said, musingly,—

"She has inherited her mother's delicacy of organisation I am afraid. Has Keenan seen her?"

"Yes, sir. He says it is nothing but constitutional debility. He ordered the cold salt bath and fresh air and exercise every day, with a milk diet; and I assure you Minny most scrupulously follows the letter of his commands. I wish, sir, I could persuade you to leave Minny with her. She is so fond of Minny—her life lies in Minny. If you take away Minny you take away her life."

Ernest Dent, still holding the babe's hand and looking down upon her face, said, as if speaking to himself,—

"Children's affections must necessarily be very facile. She would doubtless attach herself to a new nurse in a very short space of time."

And, imprinting a kiss on his child's large round forehead—her mother's forehead—he stood up and said,—

"Miss Summers is extremely fastidious in this matter of a personal attendant. Minny is delicate and graceful, and suits the refined taste of Miss Summers. I could not probably find another girl whom she would suffer about her person."

"But see here, Colonel Dent. Excuse my freedom for once: it is for the child's sake that I speak. Listen to me. You and your young bride will be happy without doubt. You are going to be married, and going a long summer voyage to a strange country, to new scenes, and into gay company—about to enjoy honours and splendours, and everything that rank, and wealth, and place, and power can give you. Your lady may easily afford to make one small sacrifice for this poor baby, who will be left behind ——"

Just at this moment Minny herself came into the room to look for her nursling. As soon as the child saw her she slipped down from the old lady's lap, and, toddling up to her, clasped her dress, and drew her toward the bed; then, pulling aside the bed-curtains, the infant pointed to the empty bed, and looked up into the face of her nurse, with a world of sad meaning in her eyes.

Minny understood her, and the child saw that she did, for she ran and got the slippers again, held them up, looked earnestly in her eyes, and began in lisping accents to try to tell her little story of revived memory, of hope, and of sorrowful disappointment. Minny took her up, and, caressing her tenderly, pressed her to her bosom, and carried her out.

"You see that, sir?"

"What?"

"Why, how she loves Minny, and how well Minny understands her. It would be such a pity to part them."

Colonel Dent was standing at the bureau. He was holding in his hand Hester's little blue velvet pocket Bible, the wedding offering from her people. He had not seen this little book for a year. He was now turning over its leaves listlessly. Casting his eyes by chance on the fly-leaf, he read with some surprise this inscription, traced in a faint and irregular chirography, and bearing date the day before her death,—

"*Ernest Dent,*

"*from his dear Hester.*

"'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'"

He had not seen this before, and now this token, seeming from the grave, smote upon his heart.

"Were you speaking, Mrs. Wimsat?"

"Yes, sir, about Minny ——"

"Oh, certainly! She is to remain with my daughter."

Dear reader, are you tired of this baby scene? I cannot help it. I loved Hester, and, next to dwelling on her

memory, I love to linger over her child; but you will have no more of it.

They were married. Let me pause here. Let me present to you these two people as they stood upon the deck of the ship Mercury, on a beautiful evening in April, watching the sunset at sea. One of them, at least, you will never see to such advantage again. Ernest Dent was now forty-five years old, possessing a large, strong, muscular frame, that seemed built to last a century. Having lived in perfect health—an active, temperate, and unimpassioned life in the mountains of Virginia—every year of time had only served to mature and perfect this very ideal of manly beauty and vigour—this Apollo with the strength of Hercules—this Hercules with the beautiful proportions of Apollo.

But now the fire is applied to this goodly mass of fuel—Love and Ambition! He will grow old fast enough now.

Juliette! Juliette was now twenty-two years of age. I shall not even attempt to portray her. Words that have been used and abused until they have lost their meaning, become vulgar and worn out, in describing other beauties, will not do for her—the beautiful demon! Dream yourself away into the regions of poetry and imagination, and image forth your brightest ideal of dark, splendid, majestic feminine beauty.

They were married, and now he possessed her—this ardently desired Juliette, for whom he would have lost his soul—this bewildering Joy, as he had called her in a moment of rapture—this woman so charged with electricity for him, that the lightest fall of her fingers on his hand had power to send a thrilling shudder of ecstatic joy through every vein and nerve to his heart's core! Now he possessed her! and his life was all excitement, exhilaration, ecstasy, delirium.

It was his first passion. How long was it to last?

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FIRST QUARREL.

"But jealous souls will not be answer'd so;
They are not ever jealous for a cause;
But jealous for they 're jealous. It is a monster
Begot upon itself—born on itself."—OTHELLO.

How fleeting is such blissful insanity! How soon the mind recovers its reason with a sad surprise, followed by a deep despair! In vain does it plead, like the sluggard, for a respite from awakening, for "a little more slumber, a little more sleep, a little more folding of the hands to sleep," that it may dream on undisturbed its dream of joy. The reason is awake and inexorable—will suffer no more "dreaming of dreams" and "seeing of visions." "And is this all, then? Is this the end?" it inquires with incredulous sorrow. What has now become of the enthusiasm with which we adored our idol, the worship by which we deified our divinity? Where is the temple, the niche, the god, and the altar? Gone—washed away—carried off by the receding tide of passion! The sea came in power, and devastating has been its retreat. More fleeting still than the duration of passion is the brief joy that it gives. Ernest Dent's joy lasted undisturbed just so long as his summer voyage to France, and no longer. They reached Paris just before the commencement of that season of splendid festivities which followed and celebrated the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine, when all the light and splendour of earth culminated over Paris as its glorious meridian, concentrated in one point of transcending brilliancy, the centre of attraction, the Emperor Napoleon. It was as though the sun's beams reversed all radiated to its centre. At the time that the superb egotist exclaimed, in his sublime self-appreciation, "Europe is the world; France Europe; Paris France; and *I* am Paris." Alighting

gently from the sublime to the insignificant, do you fancy that our Virginian firefly was lost in the blaze of the sun—the throne of the emperor? Ah! a few octogenarian ladies of the *ancien régime* are still living who remember the gossip of that period, and could tell you much of the name and fame of *La Circé Américaine*, the syren of Josephine's court.

Upon the day of her first presentation at court the American ambassadress wore a rich amber-coloured satin, wrought with seed pearls. Her beautiful hair was caught up by a jewel-studded comb, and dropped in graceful ringlets about the stately head. A splendid Valenciennes lace veil, confined by a diamond star and a small drooping plume of ostrich feathers, fell to her feet. Diamond bracelets clasped her arms, and a diamond necklace encircled her throat. As she passed up the hall of audience, leaning on the arm of the Prince Eugene, between rows of the most distinguished men and most celebrated women of Europe, a murmur of admiration, scarcely repressed by the presence of the emperor, ran through the room. As she courtesied and retired all eyes followed her. From that day her transcending beauty, grace, and genius, her rare accomplishments and fine taste, became the theme of general conversation. Her portrait was painted by the first artist in France, and hung in the gallery of the Louvre; and many, whose position in society excluded them from the presence of the fair ambassadress, resorted thither to look upon the likeness of the celebrated beauty. Colonel Dent was at first proud of her brilliant success, of the admiration, the wonder, her beauty excited. His liberality and her extravagance knew no bounds. The revenues of his Virginian estates, for many years to come, were sunk in the purchase of jewellery a queen might have coveted in vain. But under the circumstances of their love and marriage, and with a woman of Juliette's ardent temperament, and a man of Ernest Dent's severe code, this happy state of affairs could not last for ever. He saw her surrounded by the most brilliant men of that brilliant era, by heroes of a hundred victorious fields, by statesmen of splendid talents, by courtiers of elegant

eddress. He saw her the cynosure of the youth, the genius, the chivalry of France. He saw her, it is true, receiving the homage of her circle with the air of its sovereign, but the air of a gracious sovereign, and his heart took alarm. He saw one youthful form of exquisite grace and beauty, of lofty station and of proud name, ever by her side; one youthful pair of eyes, ever veiled with young love's timid adoration in her presence, and he hated the Prince Eugene with the intense hatred a middle-aged man bears to his youthful rival. And now commenced the workings of his sin in its own act of retribution. His eyes were opened, and he saw the nakedness of his folly. He saw Juliette as she had been ungrateful to her benefactress, faithless to her friend, repaying the sweetest favours by the foulest treachery; and when his heart would try to excuse her by saying, "Her passion for you did this," his jealousy would suggest, "May not her passion for still another lead her to betray me as she betrayed her friend?" And when his heart, still pleading her cause, would say, "But she did not fall," reason would reply, "Not to the lowest degree of treachery or crime, but who shall say how much of policy, how little of principle, influenced her conduct?" Thus he tortured himself. And he thought of the twenty-three years' disparity in their ages, and groaned. He need not thus have suffered, but that it was the natural fruit, the inevitable result of his treachery. It was so logical that the man who had proved faithless himself should be unable to trust in the fidelity of another, when that other had been the partner in his treason. It was so obvious that he must view everything like fashionable gaiety in Juliette through a false light. There was no levity that should have disturbed him in the manners of the beauty. She was now too proud for that. She eschewed even the licensed coquetry of a Frenchwoman of fashion. Besides, in those early days of her marriage, she loved her husband with the full force of her strong, passionate nature. Did you, perchance, suppose that Juliette was only a cold abstraction of diabolical selfishness and cunning? Every glossy lock of her purple-black hair, every amber shade and ruby light in her rich complexion,

every wave in the undulating outline of her graceful form, confuted that idea. She adored her husband. She received the homage of the first men in the empire as her natural tribute, as a matter of course, and with a haughty indifference. Women like Juliette set a high value upon rank, title, celebrity; but they place a higher value upon the strictly personal qualities of the man they love—qualities that no merely external circumstances like the rise or fall of an empire could affect. She worshipped her husband; her whole countenance would irradiate with a haughty, a voluptuous, an audacious joy, as she would turn her proud eyes from the adoring gaze of some starred and gartered hero, to rest them upon the august form of Colonel Dent. I said "august form," and I do not retract the word; for, whether he stood in the shade of his native mountains, or in the light of Napoleon's court, the presence of Ernest Dent was imposing. Yes, I repeat it, she idolised her husband, and, with the proud recklessness of her character, she chose to reverse all the rules of good society by letting her worshippers see that she did. She knew and felt her power in society, and the latent element of haughty defiance began to develope itself in her character. Yet Ernest Dent was wretched. There was a canker in his rose of joy, an aloe in his wine of love, a jarring discord in the music of his life. The evil of his treachery was beginning to interpret itself. He might have seen how exclusively she loved him; but when was alarmed affection ever clear-sighted? When was jealousy ever reasonable? And his distrust had, alas! too rational a foundation in their antenuptial treachery. He only saw her wondrous beauty; he only saw her circle of worshippers, and the one youthful, rapt devotee; he only remembered her ardent temperament, her unstable principles, her grave fault; he only thought of his own forty-five years, his heavy person, his grave demeanour, contrasted with the fresh beauty, the agile grace, and the princely rank of her youthful lover. The gathering storm broke forth at last.

There was a royal fête given at the palace. The glory of the court and camp of Bonaparte was there. Juliette, arrayed in all her beauty, clothed with all her fascinations,

was present, and, of course, this queen of beauty held her own peculiar court in a recess of the gorgeous saloon. Lady reader, I shall make no excuse for again describing Juliette's costume, for we women always like to know how celebrated belles dress, don't we? And, gentleman reader, you are at liberty to skip the next half page, or any other portion of this veritable history, that you have had the bad taste to consider tedious. The beauty's last dress was always considered the *chef-d'œuvre de l'art de toilette*. She always blended with the highest fashion the most picturesque effect, pure taste with poetic fancy. Her costume ever had a latent allegorical meaning. Upon this occasion she chose to be a sunbeam, and her stately grace and imperial bearing lent dignity and propriety to a costume which, worn by a mere common-place woman, would have seemed too gaudy. The dress was a fine, thin, light, airy gold-thread gauze, over a rich white satin; and her bright hair was looped up with festoons of yellow topazes, while the same warm-hued jewels glowed upon her bosom, neck, and arms. This dress harmonised beautifully with her rich, dark, bright complexion; and, as she floated through the *salon* in the mazes of the waltz, her lover thought of sunlight glancing through the hall. Eugene followed her with his eyes; Eugene saw her led to a distant and lonely alcove; saw her dismiss her partner with a wave of the hand; saw her recline in graceful lassitude. By a hasty glance around he saw, or thought he saw, that her retreat was unobserved except by himself. It would have been lucky, Prince Eugene, if you had had a pair of eyes in the back of your not young head, for then you would have seen a tall, stout figure looming up behind you, like the Colossus of Rhodes, and making faces like the Laocoon. Prince Eugene moved toward her, the Colossus following unobserved in his track. Eugene was at her side—was at her feet; her hand was raised in passionate fervour to his lips; his eyes were lifted in silent adoration to her face. Juliette calmly and proudly withdrew her hand as she said,—

"The rooms are oppressively warm. Will you give me your arm to the gardens, *colonel*?"

The prince arose with surprise, yet with graceful self-

possession turned to meet *Colonel Dent*, just as the latter replied to Juliette,—

"Doubtless his highness will render you that service with pleasure, madam. *I* go to meet the Duc de Cadore in the closet of the emperor."

Colonel Dent turned away as Juliette arose with graceful dignity to accept the proffered arm of the prince. Not one word was said. People in good society never have the "shocking bad taste" to commit such a solecism in manners as to betray surprise, distrust, or anger "before folks." The fête was over. It had been an evening of high triumph to the beauty. Sovereign queens and royal princesses had graced the revels, yet she had been the "observed of all observers." She had been the real queen at the brilliant assemblage. Never had she felt so proud a consciousness of the power of her charms as now. The fête was over, and Juliette reclined in her luxurious dressing-room before a large cheval mirror, and under the hands of her maid. Mademoiselle Fanchette was untwining from her glossy tresses the strings of topazes that had bound them. The door opened, and Colonel Dent entered. He walked up near Juliette, and stood with folded arms and moody brow contemplating the gorgeous beauty. From time to time her fine eyes were raised with pride to meet her own reflection in the mirror, or her rich tones heard in giving some direction to her maid relative to the disposal of her ornaments. At last, coming to her side, he said in deep, cold tones,—

"Send your maid away, Juliette. I want a few words with you alone."

Now, with a presentiment of what was coming, a perverse spirit entered into the beauty, and she answered coolly,—

"I have not done with her."

"Dismiss your attendant at once, madam! or you will oblige me to do it for you," said he, sternly.

"Will madam permit me to retire?" pleaded the girl, in some embarrassment.

Juliette arose, and with quiet dignity remarked,—

"We will give you up the possession of this room,

Colonel Dent, since your convenience seems to require it. Fanchette, precede me to my bed-chamber."

"Not so, fair Juliette. You do not leave this room yet."

She passed on unheeding him. He stepped after her, took her hand, and led her back to the chair. Too proud to resist, she gracefully yielded to the point, and, seating herself, inquired,—

"To what happy circumstance am I to consider myself indebted for the pleasure of this interview with Colonel Dent?"

Without replying he turned and walked slowly up and down the room, with folded arms and head bowed upon his chest. She followed him with her eyes. She saw the thunder-cloud lowering on his brow, the chained lightning in his eyes, and the white hue of the typhoon on his cheek. At this moment there was not one spark of resentment or fear in the bosom of the beauty. Elate even to intoxication with her recent triumphs (for the very highest head in that high hall had bowed before her power), she had returned home in a gay recklessness of consequences, thirsting for more excitement, and of a different kind, as an inebriate thirsts for more and other wine. Thus she was not in the best mood for receiving with benefit a lecture even from the man whom her deepest heart warmly, fervently acknowledged as its sovereign. No; on the contrary, she was in the humour, from pure wantonness, to exasperate him to frenzy for her own amusement, not knowing, or not remembering, or caring to remember, that he in his turn might sting her to madness. She had never doubted the ardour or the exclusiveness of his affection for her, and now she witnessed its manifestation in a new, extremely interesting, and exciting phase. This stimulated her curiosity to search deeply the heart she valued so highly; therefore she designed to raise its emotion to a boiling heat, that its profoundest secrets might be thrown up to the surface, not caring though she herself might be scalded in her experiment. Can I make you understand the wanton perversity of her present temper? The intense mental as well as physical sensuality of this highly tempered organ-

isation; this woman whose largest life was sensation, and who, rather than suffer emotion to subside to inanity, would arouse it by pain? Her cool audacity at the commencement of this scene was a piece of fine acting. There was, beneath the freezing exterior and insolent manner capriciously assumed for the purpose of exasperating him, an under current of wild, passionate ardour that, having its way, would have thrown her into his arms, upon his bosom. She was watching intently to see the white rage break forth in fury. She was disappointed. He walked and walked until he had perfected his self-command. Then he came and sat beside her. He spoke:—

"Juliette, you are at this moment as perfectly well aware of the cause of my disturbance as I am myself. You have not failed to observe, I have not failed to *see* that you have observed, the uneasiness your conduct has given me. I had hoped that your knowledge of my anxiety would have, in some degree, influenced and modified your conduct, and I was silent. This hope has been frustrated; and I have now to violate my own delicacy and yours by speaking, perhaps by acting. Much, Juliette, have I felt inclined to extenuate your culpable levity by reflecting that the striking change in your position and circumstances may have somewhat turned your brain."

This really piqued the proud woman, who replied haughtily,—

"I am unconscious of any such 'striking change' of position, at least of any calculated to elate with pride the last of the noble house of Nozzalina."

"That is all wretched assumption, Juliette. *You* know nothing about the nobility or *ig*nobility of your family, and I care less. I speak of the change that plunged a young girl, a beautiful girl, accustomed to the sober domesticity of our country life, or, at best, to the elegant courtesy and delicate reserve of our metropolitan society, at once into a vortex of fashionable dissipation in the most licentious city, and the most splendid court in Europe. That is the change I speak of, and I see that it has been too great for you. I should not have thus exposed you. I should have denied myself, and left you at the Vale rather, but

that you have a noble presence, Juliette, and I had hoped that in this gay and frivolous capital you would have nobly illustrated the calm dignity of the American matron. You have disappointed, wounded, humiliated me."

"Oh! you are jealous, jealous as a lemon, a lime, a crab-apple, verjuice, verdigris, or anything else particularly sour, bitter, and cankerous," said she, with a taunting smile.

"'Jealous?' Yes, I *am* jealous, not *of* any one—that were contemptible—but *for* you, and *of* my own honour. Do you happen to have heard, madam, the flattering *sobriquet* bestowed upon you by the gallants of the French court?"

"Yes," replied the beauty, with gay assurance, "they call me *La Circé Américaine*. Prettily conceived, is it not?"

"'Prettily conceived!' God in heaven! Juliette! if you begin by calling that insult, at which you should blush, 'prettily conceived,' where will you end? What will you inspire them to call you next? The American Aspasia, probably; the American Messalina, possibly; the American Ninon, without a doubt!"

He strode up and down the room in agitation several times, and then he stood before her again. She looked at him with an audacious joy, sparkling through her dark eyes, that were purposely veiled by their long lashes, and farther to provoke him she said, flippantly,—

"By the way, how did you like my costume this evening, Colonel Dent?"

"Insolent! Your 'costume!' Well, I will take patience and answer you. I felt humiliated that any woman that bore my name should be tricked out in a gauze of gold like a tawdry actress. An actress! I do not know that any actress would have so bedecked herself."

"No, I suppose not. Few actresses or empresses could have worn that dress with dignity and propriety; but, do you know, Colonel Dent, that I happen to take particular pleasure in assuming a dress no other woman could venture to wear, much less become; and farther, do you happen to know, Colonel Dent, that if the diamond were a malleable substance, and if any process could be discovered by which

it could be drawn out into fine threads, and woven into a flashing web, I would have a dress of it? That would be clothing myself 'with light as a garment,' wouldn't it?"

"Blasphemer! be silent! I will not permit such irreverent use of Scripture language."

"Is that in the Bible? Oh! I beg your pardon. I thought it was in Shakspeare, or some of the Greek classics. Nay, I am sure it must have been in Euripides—in the Medea of Euripides, and had reference to her bridal gift to Glaucé. Now, do you know, Colonel Dent, what I think the chief glory of that old 'raw-head and bloody-bones' story—the Medea—with which you used to bore poor Hester and myself, of winter evenings, at the Vale, until we were both nearly dead with sleep and weariness? Just this—Medea's glorious robe of woven sun-rays, the appropriate gift of her grandfather Apollo. Now, Jason might have gone whither he listed. I certainly shouldn't have sent such a splendid dress after him."

"Trifler! But, no; you are not a trifler, Juliette. Be well assured that I know that. This flippancy is assumed to evade a serious consideration of the question. And now will you be so good as to give me your attention, madam? This career of yours is arrested just at the point it has now reached. I shall write to Washington by the next ship, requesting my recall."

Juliette smiled, as well she might, when she said,—

"Scarce six months ago you told me that you descended to solicit this appointment for the purpose of having an excuse to marry and take me with you. Now you talk of writing to request your recall. Truly

'Naught's gain'd, all's spent,
When our desire is got without content.'"

"Most truly, Juliette. Still I will not permit political distinction, scarcely even political duty, to be the means of endangering my domestic peace, or the honour of my house."

"'The honour of your house!' Do your words admit of explanation, Colonel Dent?" exclaimed she, haughtily.

"Yes, madam; you are proud, but not steadfast; and pride alone would not sustain you, has not sustained you."

Then curbing his resentment, he sat down beside her;

he took her hand and talked to her as he thought her case demanded, admitting the strong fascinations her brilliant position in society must have for one like her; he warned her of the temptations and dangers that surrounded her, the snares and pitfalls in her path of life; he told her, as he could tell her, how Satan approaches the heart in the form of an angel of light, singing a song of joy, giving a promise of heaven. The very spirit of perversity and wantonness now reigned in the heart of Juliette. She cut short his eloquence with a gay laugh. His brow flushed.

"What do you mean by that, madam?"

"It is so amusing!"

Again her silvery laugh rang out upon the air.

He grew angry.

"Leave the room, Mrs. Dent!"

"When I please, sir! I remained here first for your pleasure; I remain here now for my own. If you have the bad taste to weary of my company you are at liberty to withdraw yourself."

"What do you mean by this contemptuous conduct, madam?"

"'Madam'—yes. A Frenchman always calls his wife 'Madam' from politeness—an Englishman or an American never, except he be in a rage with her. Listen, Colonel Dent, Senator Dent, Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary, &c., President of the Virginia Liberty Convention, Delegate to the Episcopal Synod, and Vestryman of All-Saints' Parish—listen to *me*. When you review your troops, and talk to them of courage, patriotism, and glory; when you address the Senate upon the subject of General Emancipation; when you speak to the Convention of Equal Rights; when you harangue the Synod upon the Unity of the Faith; when you exhort the Vestry upon the claims of Foreign Missions, you may stand some chance of gaining credit for sincerity, as well as for eloquence; but when you read your wife a lecture upon modesty, discretion, and fidelity—pardon me, it is too amusing! as though King David, after the episode of Uriah's wife, had become eloquent upon the seventh commandment!"

"Scorner!"

"Ay, '*scorner*.' I *do* scorn hypocrisy."

Then changing her tone to one of haughty assurance, she said,—

"But you need not fear, Colonel Dent; my pride, if no better motive, will keep my honour bright."

"Your pride has not heretofore sustained you, madam. 'Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction.' I feel constrained to tell you, Juliette, that a woman whose passion has once betrayed her principle is not secure, at least in her youth, from a second error. I speak this in warning, not in reproach."

She half started, looked at him keenly, half arose, sank down in her seat again, the blood rushed to her face, and retreating left it pale as marble. She had not believed that he could have wounded her thus, yet she knew that extreme delicacy and tenderness formed no part of Ernest Dent's large, strong organisation. At last "Traitor! dastard!" escaped between her clenched teeth. "O God! how I loathe myself for ever having loved this—dastard!'

"Dastard!" the most provoking, the most exasperating word that a man can hear from a woman's lip. He replied,—

"Loathe yourself as I now loathe you for having loved, not the man, but his rank; loathe yourself as I loathe you for having repaid benefits with ingratitude, trust with treachery, loathe yourself as I loathe you for having betrayed the confidence of your best friend and benefactress, my angel wife, Hester!'

It was now her turn to start from her seat, and pace the floor with the rage of a chafed lioness. At last she, trembling, paused before him, yet even then in her rage she was guileful

"And who led me into this? Oh! coward and traitor! Who led me into this? I was a young, unsophisticated girl—am so still; you a 'potent, grave, and reverend seignior.' Heaven save the mark! a pillar in the state! and I an unwary girl, whom you should have guided into holiness, not led into sin. You said that my passion had betrayed my principle. Why had you not said *our* passion? Recollect yourself, Ernest Dent! Send back your thoughts

to the past! If it had not been for my steadfastness of principle, where, in Heaven's name, should I have been now? No, sir! it was not your principles, but mine, that saved us from the last degree of crime!"

"Your principle, fair Juliette? Do you suppose that when I witness the freedom of your manners in public, when I witnessed the scene with the Prince Eugene, that I give you credit for great moral principle? No, fair Juliette, it was your policy that saved us. It did not suit your ambitious views to be the mistress of a man whose wife you might eventually become if you preserved your maiden honour, and not otherwise"

Ernest Dent did not fully believe this, even while he spoke it, nevertheless the truth of it stung Juliette to madness.

'Traitor! dastard! coward! Oh! language is weak, is poor to express my detestation, my loathing, my utter disgust at you and myself as connected with you!"

Her very lips were quivering, cold, and white with the passion that convulsed her.

"Let me confront you, Ernest Dent! Let me confront you with a truth that I wish may annihilate you! I love the Prince Eugene, General Beauharnais—the young hero whose brow, at eighteen, is wreathed with more laurels than will deck your aged front at eighty! I love the Prince Eugene! Does that strike home? I'm glad of it! Here is more. Even as you, in Hester's lifetime, oblivious of your marriage vows, loved me, so I have given my heart to Eugene! Does that kill you? Now do your worst. Divorce me. Nay, I beg that you will do it. Eugene is the adopted son of Napoleon, the probable heir to his throne. Eugene adores me! worships the very breeze that passes over me! Come, divorced women have filled thrones before now!"

This was the very typhoon of her torrid nature; this was the very raving of insanity. She had arisen wildly from her seat; she had torn off, and cast upon the floor, necklace, bracelet, and rings, as she passed toward the door; her figure swaying from side to side; her head thrown back, and shaking impatiently like that of a

maniac; her fingers twisted in her purple tresses, which she tore out by the roots, and cast behind her. So she left the room. When she had disappeared, with one of those strange reactions of tenderness in jealousy, he stepped toward the middle of the room, stooped and gathered up the torn tresses of her hair, returned with them to his seat near her dressing-table, and smoothed them tenderly. Resting his elbows on the table, and holding her hair in the open palms of his hands, he dropped his face upon it; inhaling its perfume, he pressed it to his brow, to his lips, to his bosom; and, finally, opening his shirt, he laid it next his heart. He now regretted that he had reproached her so bitterly; for, contrary to her intention, her audacious raving about Eugene had quite set his heart at rest upon the subject, for he was sure that, had she felt the faintest lurking interest in Eugene, it would have been the very last thing she could have been exasperated to declare.

Wildly, recklessly, Juliette had passed on to her bed-chamber, had opened the door by dashing her hand against it, had thrown herself, all richly arrayed as she was, upon the bed. Her maid approached from some dark corner of the chamber, and, standing over her, exclaimed in horror,—

"Oh, miladi! de beautiful dress! it vill all ruin! Sall I get you your *robe de nuit!*"

With a haggard look, and an adjuring gesture, she sent her from the room. The girl slightly shrugged her shoulder, and elevated her eyebrows. She surmised that there had been "a scene with mousieur," and luckily for her equanimity, she had known such before in families where she had lived. Fanchette was a philosopher, so she coolly betook herself to the dressing-room, which was now vacant, and began to set things in order for her lady's morning toilet. Juliette remained extended on the bed, her cold hands clasped and pressed upon her burning brow, a weight like the weight of Atlas oppressing her chest to suffocation. She lay enfolded in the coils of the serpents' anger, grief, remorse, whose fangs were plunged in her heart. The happy subjects of a first passionate love delude themselves with the sweet belief that their joy is immortal. True,

they have heard, and read, and seen, that the ecstasy of other lovers subsides; but they never dream that such can be the case with them. The very intensity of their happiness, the intensity that must accelerate its decline and death, but confirms their faith in its immortality. That is the very brightest illusion of life, the very rays around the brow of Faith, whose vanishing leaves the very soul of Faith dark for awhile. The wretched subjects of a first violent love quarrel also deceive themselves with the dreadful belief that their feud is eternal, their grief incurable. They also have the experience of others who have preceded them; but it does not serve them. They have heard, read, and seen that other dreadful quarrels have been reconciled; but they cannot, durst not hope for such an end to their own trouble The very bitterness of their quarrel, the very fierceness of their storm, the fierceness that in expending resentment must hasten its end, only fixes more firmly the sad belief that their wretchedness must last for ever. They think that the angry words, the insulting charges, the shameful epithets, that have passed like hot shot between them, can never be forgotten or forgiven. Nay, they even think it would be wrong, degrading, to bow their pride to grant, far less to seek, forgiveness for such injuries But dark illusions vanish as well as bright ones; shadows fade as well as lights. Upon the whole, night lasts no longer than day. Soon the loving enemies begin to feel anger, pride, doubt, all vanishing before a returning and overmastering tenderness. The thunder and lightning have ceased, and a soft rain, bright with the rays of the sun that is trying to break through, is descending. No matter how greatly the dignity of the man, the delicacy of the woman has been outraged, all is forgotten. This dark illusion belongs only to a first quarrel, this bright illusion only to a first love, before experience has taught that every human passion, benign or malign, like the day, has its dawn, its meridian glory, and its decline; like the year has its spring, summer, autumn, and winter; like the sea has its flow and ebb; like the sky has its sunshine and its clouds; like man has his birth, life, and death. Juliette was not one

to remain long in any sort of pain without seeking relief. Half rising, she reached and pulled the bell-rope. Her maid entered.

"Darkness; I want darkness."

Fanchette extinguished the lamp and retired. But the burning fire was in Juliette's heart, and external darkness failed to relieve her. She touched the bell again. The girl re-entered.

"Opium!"

Fanchette left the room, and soon returned with the desired narcotic. Juliette swallowed it at a draught, and fell back, overpowered by the influence of the drug.

It was near the dawn of day when Juliette had thrown herself down in her despair, and had sought to dull the aching of her heart with opium. It was near the noon when Ernest Dent sought her chamber. The room was closed, the windows were down, and the sun was shining through the crimson curtains. And there she lay upon the rich bed, in her disordered festal robes, with one arm and half her hair wildly thrown up over her pillow, with pale and haggard face, parched lips, and bloodshot eyelids. He stood looking moodily at her for awhile, then summoning Fanchette, he directed her to open the windows to admit air, and to have a bath prepared for her lady by the time she awoke; and then he left the room and the house, and set out for Versailles, to fulfil an engagement previously made to meet General Armstrong at a diplomatic dinner given by Monsieur de Champagny.

It was late in the afternoon when Juliette awoke—awoke with a dull, vague, heavy impression of a deep grief, for which she could not at first account. Then, as full consciousness returned, she groaned. Fanchette, who had been sitting sewing at the foot of the bed, arose and went to her.

"Do you know if Colonel Dent is in the house?"

"No, miladi; monsieur set out for Versailles about three hours ago."

"Did he leave a message or a note?"

"No, miladi."

Juliette clasped her hands over her brow, and sighed.

"Will you rise now, miladi?"

"What is the hour?"

"Five o'clock, madam."

"Yes."

Indifferently, almost stupidly, Juliette resigned herself to the hands of her dressing-maid. The bath, and after that a strong cup of coffee, somewhat restored her spirits. Throwing on a loose dressing-gown, and giving directions that no one should be admitted, she passed to her boudoir, sank into a lounging chair, and bade Fanchette wheel to her side the little table upon which stood the mother-of-pearl basket that held the visiting cards, notes of invitations, billets-doux, &c., that had been left in the course of the morning. With these she tried to occupy herself, opening and reading each in succession, and impatiently casting them under the table. At last she gave over her occupation, and with a sigh leaned back in her chair. Fanchette was looking at her, and with more kindness than discretion ventured at an attempt at comfort.

"Miladi."

Juliette replied only by lifting her languid eyelids.

"It will blow over, believe me, it will. I have seen so many of them; and if you had only seen monsieur this morning——"

But by this time the girl had met her lady's eyes fixed upon her in haughty surprise, looking her into silence, into annihilation, and she stopped short, wondering at having met at last a mistress who would not make a confidante of her maid. One clause of the girl's speech had struck Juliette forcibly, electrifying her heart with hope. "If you had only seen monsieur this morning." Had he relented, then? Was he, too, suffering? She was too proud to ask any questions. Upon this evening there was to be a *bal costumé* given by Madame de Champagny at Versailles. Juliette had accepted an invitation to attend. Now she determined to keep her engagement. Colonel Dent, after the dinner, would doubtless remain to the *bal*. There she would find the first opportunity of meeting him; and then, too, they might ride home together. Rousing herself she called Fanchette to attend her, and went into her dressing-

room. Setting aside the elegant sultana's dress she had caused to be prepared for the occasion, and sending for a plain black domino, she assumed it, took a black velvet mask, and, entering her carriage that stood in readiness at the door, she was driven toward Versailles. The festival was half over when she arrived. The company had already laid aside their masks. It was not many minutes, however, before she was discovered. Monsieur de Champagny approached her, saying,—

"You must pardon me for not having recognised you before, dear lady; for, in truth, I had not seen any eclipse of the sun foretold for to-day."

Without noticing the flattery Juliette said,—

"I will tax your kindness, monsieur, to ascertain whether Colonel Dent is in the room."

"He is not, madam. Immediately after dinner he set out on his return to Paris."

"Then, monsieur, shall I trouble you to have my carriage called?"

With a bow he retired to do her bidding. In a few minutes Juliette was driven along the road leading from Versailles to Paris. It was near the dawn of day when she arrived.

"Where is Colonel Dent?"

"Retired to rest, madam."

She sought her own chamber. He was not there.

"Where is he, Fanchette?"

"On a couch in his dressing-room, madam."

She hurried thither. The door was closed. She tried the lock: it was fastened on the inside. And then, overwrought by the fatigue, suspense, and disappointment, the torture of the day, she sank down at the outside of the door and wept—that haughty woman!—like a heart-broken child.

Presently Fanchette came looking for her, and, seeing her condition, exclaimed, "Dear lady, even if you were to strike me down dead with your black eyes I can't let you lie here! I can't indeed, not if you kill me with your black eyes! For just think, if you go to the palace to-morrow looking pale, and ill, and ugly, they will lay the whole blame on your dressing-maid. They will say I

don't understand my business, and I shall never, never get another engagement. Dear lady, you always look so beautiful when you are dressed that I was in hopes you would make my fortune—that when I left your service I might command any salary as the best *artiste de toilette* in Paris. But now, dearest miladi, I think you are going to ruin me, between wearing that horrid black domino to the *bal masqué*, and spoiling your complexion with opium, and ruining your eyes with weeping. Besides, dear lady, there is not one of the men, not the best of them—not the emperor—worth growing ugly for. Besides, it will ruin me; so, dear lady, you must get up. I can't let you lie here, indeed I can't—no, not if you were to kill me with your black eyes!" and Fanchette stooped down and took hold of her mistress's hands.

Juliette had not distinguished one word of this strange exhortation, but she half unconsciously yielded to the impulse given her, arose, and suffered herself to be led to her room and seated in her large chair. Languidly she permitted Fanchette to sponge her face, hands, and eyes with *eau de rose*, and prepare her for bed, talking all the time, "Dear lady, he 'll come round. He 's only sulking. It 's the way with them all. I 've seen so many of them."

"For God's sake, hush!" at last she said, "and leave the room."

She said no more. Fanchette need not have been afraid of being blasted by her black eyes then—she was so subdued, so weary, so thoroughly worn out and broken down. Grieved love does make such babies of us all. Fanchette assisted her to bed, drew the curtains, put out the light, and left the room. Exhausted with bodily fatigue and mental anxiety, Juliette sank into a deep sleep—a natural sleep—from which she awoke late in the day, refreshed. Her bell summoned her maid, who soon entered. Juliette did not ask now, as upon the preceding day, "Where is Colonel Dent?" Nevertheless, the girl took upon herself to inform her, "He is gone, miladi, off post haste to Versailles this morning. Don't mind him, madam. There ain't one of them worth minding. Have

your bath, and look charming in the saloon of the empress to-day."

Juliette arose, bathed, dressed, and breakfasted. When at last she was seated in her boudoir she sent for her purse, and, taking from it three or four pieces of gold, she placed them in the hands of Fanchette, saying, "Here are two months' wages in advance. Go and seek another service."

"Miladi!" exclaimed the girl, in painful surprise.

"You have given offence—you are discharged."

"Miladi! *how* have I been so unfortunate?"

"You have offended me. It is enough; you are dismissed. Leave the room."

The girl looked, and saw such unrelenting determination upon her lady's face, that she courtesied and retired in silence. In fact, Juliette would not endure the sight of one who had witnessed her humiliation. Another weary day passed. Because she could not rest she had appeared at the saloon of the empress. For the same reason she attended the opera in the evening. Returning home late, and not wishing to betray her anxiety by inquiring for him, she merely said to the servant that admitted her,—

"Let Colonel Dent know that I have come home.'

"Colonel Dent has not yet returned, madam."

Juliette suppressed a rising groan, and went into his dressing-room to await him.

Colonel Dent, upon the morning succeeding their quarrel, had gone to a diplomatic dinner, as we have seen. Immediately after coffee he had arisen to take leave, declining the pressing invitation of his hostess to remain for the evening's masque. He hurried back to Paris in much anxiety upon Juliette's account. Her image was haunting him, not as she stood before him in her dressing-room, her form erect and elated, her lips writhing, and eyes flashing with pride and scorn as she defied him. Not so; but as she lay upon her bed, all disordered and dishevelled, in the heavy and deathlike sleep procured by opium, with the beautiful hair he loved so well all torn and tangled about her. He wished to return and tell her that she was forgiven. It never occurred to him that there

was anything to forgive in his own conduct. He wished to kiss away the shadow from her brow, to smooth the bright hair back into its lovely waves. He felt by inspiration that she also yearned for a reconciliation, and he resolved besides that nothing on earth should induce him to spend such another unholy and comfortless night. So he revelled in the dream of his restored beauty as he rode to Paris, as he entered his own hotel. Passing up immediately to her rooms, he found them vacant; then he sought her in the saloon—in vain. He rang the bell. A servant entered.

"Go and tell Mrs. Dent's maid to let her lady know, wherever she is, that I have returned, and am waiting for her here."

"*Oui, monsieur, mais madame est allé au bal masque a Versailles.*"

"Heartless!" thought Colonel Dent as the man bowed out of the room. "Heartless! more—impertinent after all I told her—insolent, impudent! You shall repent this, my lady!" and, disappointed and angry, he passed the night alone in his dressing-room. It did not happen to occur to him that she had gone to Versailles to seek him. A quarrel is very properly called a "misunderstanding," for, certainly, misconception and misconstruction have most to do with beginning and perpetuating a feud. As soon as he had arisen the next morning he found a messenger and a letter from Monsieur de Cadore awaiting him. The letter requested his instant presence at Versailles upon business of urgent importance. He returned to Paris in the afternoon. State affairs occupied him the whole remainder of the day, yet twice he had found time to go home. Upon both occasions he found her out. "Gone to court," "Gone to the opera," were the answers given by the footmen to his questions. His heart was hardening toward her. "She does this purposely; she defies me! She must learn a different lesson. Hester could never have dared this." Just see the unconscious injustice of the man. Why had not he said, "Hester *would* never have done this?" He began to devise means to bring her "to her senses," he said to himself; to humble

her, to bring her to his feet, thence to his arms, he meant in his heart. He need not have troubled himself. Nature was doing all that for him. Juliette was awaiting him in her dressing-room. She had exchanged her heavy velvet robe, her gems and plumes, for a graceful négligé of India muslin, a white, soft, delicate dress, charmingly relieved by her black ringlets. He admired her most when she was splendidly attired, but he loved her best in this simple and elegant demi-toilet; and this, of course, she knew; and never, perhaps, had Juliette's tact been so worthily revealed. She was sitting in a deep crimson chair near his dressing-table at the end of the room. It was a long room, and at the opposite end was the door leading into the passage. The thickly carpeted passage returned no echo to the heaviest tread, so she did not listen to *hear* his footsteps, but watched the door nervously. At last, late, near two o'clock in the morning, it opened, and Colonel Dent came in. He walked half across the floor before he saw her, and then, with a surprised and surly "Oh!" he turned on his heel, walked back, and opened the door, before he felt the thrilling clasp of the soft arms he loved around him, and the rippling music of Juliette's voice, saying,—

"Don't go, Ernest, don't go. I cannot bear this any longer, indeed I cannot. What *is* this estrangement between us? Words, angry words, are but fevered breath. Forget them, Ernest. Oh! I have been *so* wretched. I had not thought it was in *me* to be so unhappy! And you, Ernest, how do you feel?"

She had gently drawn him around, and was facing him, bending forward, leaning her hands heavily upon his folded arms, and gazing anxiously, imploringly up into his countenance. He was looking down at her with a grave set face. He had been too baffled and disappointed of late, and was too hard now to be melted at a touch.

"Come, Ernest, sit down, *do* come," said she, taking his hand, and gently trying to draw him toward a chair. He withdrew his hand from her, and remained standing. "You won't? Well, I will wheel the chair up to you;" and she went to the large crimson chair, and drew it toward him.

"There, now; do sit down, Ernest, and let me talk to you."

"Oh! you have a tongue!" said he, as he took the seat.

"Yes, I have, and I wish it had been palsied before it gave you offence. Oh! Ernest, if you knew what it costs my pride to say this!" She sighed as she seated herself, hesitatingly, upon his knees, passed her arms gently around his neck, and dropped her head upon his bosom.

He merely suffered this caress, without attempting by look, word, or gesture, to return or encourage it. At last she raised her head, and said,—

"Where is your heart, Ernest; where *is* your heart? Does it still live? I will see if it still beats."

Her own heart was ready to break; it had cost her so much to do this, and now it seemed she had bowed her pride in vain. A woman of less haughty temper might have coaxed and sued longer, but she withdrew her arms from his neck with a suppressed sigh, and turned away her head to arise and leave him. He passed one arm around her waist, and held her as if, though he might not care a great deal about retaining her there, yet he was not quite ready to let her go yet.

"Why did you go to the masked ball alone after I had forbidden you?"

Now Juliette's proud spirit arose, and exasperated her to reply,—

"Because I chose, sir!" but she choked back the impulse, and answered, "I went there to seek you, Ernest."

"Very well. But why to the court? and of all improprieties, why to the opera?"

"To kill time. You were gone; I was restless, wretched, and I could not stay at home."

His arm tightened around her waist now.

"You are forgiven, Juliette. You could not rest without this forgiveness, yet you could not teach your lips to ask it."

"My ears can scarcely learn to hear it," thought the high-spirited beauty; but she said, "I would to Heaven that I had either no love or no anger."

"Both naturally belong to the same high-wrought temperament, Juliette. Climes of the warmest seasons have the most thunder and lightning."

She clasped her glowing arms around him, pressed her face upon his bosom with a force as if she would grow there, and shuddered from head to foot with joy, as she said,—

"Ernest! madman! you know that I love—half worship you! You know that it is impossible any should supplant you in my heart, even if I were not your wife. Why, in Heaven's name, then, did you drive me to frenzy by your reproaches? Why did you provoke me to say things that—Ernest?"

"I have forgotten them, Juliette."

"My own dear giant! How could you have thought for a moment that I could look away from you, Ernest? Ernest, know yourself. Compare yourself with others, and you will understand me; but you cannot, it is not like your great heart to do that; besides, you could not look upon, you can only look *from* yourself. Ernest, I am called haughty, arrogant, and doubtless I am so. There is not a crowned or mitred head on earth to whom my pride would bow; there is not a boon in the gift of either for which I would condescend to sue; yet this proud head of mine has fallen like that of a dejected child upon your bosom, and this high heart of mine, half broken by the loss of your love, has learned to plead for its return. I would you knew how much this has cost me, Ernest; for then you would know how to value my love. Oh! your distrust was so gratuitous! Why, what has my glance replied to the worshipping gaze of admirers? Why this: 'The woman who queens it over you is the wife of Ernest Dent,' and glories more in the grandeur of her sovereign than in the adoration of her proudest subject.'"

Her countenance was elevated, inspired, while she spoke. She sank down at his feet, she threw her glowing arms around his knees, and nestled her proud head upon them, while her free ringlets swept to the carpet.

He stooped to caress and raise her.

"My beautiful one! My Juliette!"

They were happy. Their reconciliation was complete, for the time. Well had it been for them had this been their only quarrel. Reader, it was only their first. The cause that had produced this quarrel was not removed. The ulcer was scarred over, not healed, liable to break out again at the least irritation. It was a latent, deep-seated distrust in each other's fidelity, but too well founded on their knowledge of each other's treachery. This voice of distrust, audible even amidst the full-toned music of love, became awfully distinct in the silence of cool reflection. There was no lasting peace or happiness for them. A love sown in treason could not possibly flourish in trust. Sin is its own retributor. "God is his own interpreter."

CHAPTER XVII.

JEALOUSY AND ITS CONSEQUENCE.

"The wither'd frame, the ruin'd mind,
The wreck by passion left behind,
A shrivell'd scroll, a scatter'd leaf
Sear'd by the autumn blast of grief."—BYRON.

A YEAR had passed since Colonel (now General) Dent and his bride sailed for France. A long sea voyage; a few months amid the splendours of the French capital; a tempestuous passage home—these had been the events, the external history of their year. But the inner life?

Ernest Dent. The delirious stage of his moral insanity was past. He saw with dismay the full extent of the miserable mistake he had made. He felt, with keen remorse, the magnitude of the grievous wrong he had done to Hester and to his own nature; to his own nature, for Ernest Dent was an egotist, even in his repentance. What a glory and a splendour invest a burning building! How exciting the mad revel of the fierce and beautiful element in its power! How the blinding glare of the flames conceals the destruction they are making! Yet how soon the blaze flickers into a lambent flame—how soon goes out in smoke

and darkness! How soon dawns the light of reason and day, and shows us the ruin that is wrought!

So with the festival of passion and imagination.

What enthusiasm, what inspiration, glows through the being who has cast down Reason, and crowned Passion in her stead! What high festival, what insane revelry, what a jubilee, a carnival she keeps up in the palace of the soul, until, consumed by her own excesses, she perishes in her own fires!

So with Ernest Dent. His passion for Juliette had quite subsided. The ideal beauty and glory with which imagination had enrobed and crowned her were quite stripped off. The enchantress had lost her spell—her power was quite at an end—the electricity had been withdrawn. She might approach or recede now without causing a pulse to quicken, a nerve to start. Scarcely were his languid eyelids lifted to note her coming or her going. His vision was inverted—he was contemplating the inward waste.

His soul had striven and strained, had reached and caught the ardently coveted prize, and was now collapsed—sunk—almost dead. There is nothing in life more mournful than the depression following a high moral excitement. It is more than ennui, more than mental lassitude—it is a temporary moral death, where the body walks about, the living grave of a dead soul It is ill-guarded, earnest, passionate, imaginative natures who generally suffer this death in life, and none but the Father can raise them from this grave of hope to a purer and a higher life.

Marriage is a sort of crucible, into which the ore of love is thrown to be tried whether it be good or whether it be evil. Happy is the marriage when the pure gold of affection is found in the ashes when the fire is burned out.

It was not thus with them. Juliette, it is true, loved him still with all the force of her young, strong, ardent nature—if, indeed, the selfish, jealous, and exacting passion could be called love; but she was obliged to admit, in the vexation of her heart, that this was all on one side, when she saw him—thoughtful, morose, pre-occupied—absorbed in his own contemplations, barely tolerating her caresses, or, at most, making an effort to return them—making an

effort—what an effort to him—what a provocation to her! Sometimes, when she would be vexing him thus, he would caress her beautiful hair with his large hand, and, looking in her beautiful face with an expression of commiseration, would say in tones of deep sadness,—

"Oh, my poor Juliette, we have much to repent!"

This woman was full of sarcastic distrust. She thought that he probably regretted a mistake; she did not believe he repented a sin. Raising her stately head with all its pendent ringlets, she would reply in a tone of light ridicule,—

"Dear Ernest, you are talking to *me*."

I was about to have said that, had both repented their treachery, had both been equally capable of repentance, their penitence would have bound their hearts together; but, had Juliette been of that penetrable and conscientious nature, she had not then been capable of luring her victim from his fidelity—no treachery had then been committed.

"Dear Ursa Major," she would say, caressingly, "be at ease with me—be yourself. If not with me, with whom can you feel easy?" Then, with a graceful blending of tenderness and banter, she would whisper, "Be your own self. There is no other character half so charming to me. If you were holy Paul I could not like you any more, and if you were Satan I shouldn't like you any less; therefore, dear Bruin, put off this sermonising until you come to canvass the district."

It was thus her guileful nature deceived her. She really thought that she was doing a service, for which he would thank her, by thus putting him "at ease." They did not understand each other. There was no unity of soul between them. After such a scene as this he would relapse into gloom and apathy, and she would go off in a fit of concealed anger. To do Ernest Dent justice, he had tried hard to sustain his dying love for Juliette, and now he tried to conjure back the blissful infatuation. Ernest Dent was very free from guile. His efforts were to be affectionate, and not only to seem affectionate; and, with his simple manners, the effort was so palpable as to be more distressing than indifference. This effort, too, only confirmed

Juliette in her suspicions of his hypocrisy. And this was the inevitable consequence of their error. They had sown treachery, they must reap suspicion. Thus in the flower of their sin grew the seed of their punishment.

It would be curious to trace all the causes of their present unhappiness, did my circumscribed limits permit me to do so Among the least of the causes of Juliette's uneasiness was the ennui she felt from the contrast of her late gay life at Paris with her present tame and spiritless existence.

It would be interesting to watch the slow resurrection of Ernest Dent's dead soul to its new life of duty and activity. It would be agreeable to describe this, did time and ability permit me; but I must hasten on to an event that soon thoroughly aroused the dormant faculties of Ernest Dent. This was the extreme illness of his little girl In his unnatural apathy he had not cultivated the affections of this little one; but she, with the instinct of nature, had attached herself fondly to him. Often when Juliette had left him in pique, when he would be sitting alone in the dim old parlour at the Vale, forgetting, in his morose abstraction, to order lights, he would hear the soft pit-patting of little feet, and soon after feel the little girl's hands upon his knees He would raise her upon his knees, and she, with a sigh of ineffable content, would place her little arms around his neck, nestle her head upon his bosom, and sink to sleep. It was a beautiful thing—this unsought, this instinctive attachment of the young being to the author of its life—this longing of the infant for her father's arms and bosom. And there, in the dusky room, for hours he would sit and hold her, and the dark, quiet room, and the sleeping child on his arms, what memories they would invoke! His growing attachment to his child—her idea so intimately associated with that of her lost mother, began to infuse into his mind—what? Why, a sort of spiritual love for the lost Hester—a sort of reference to her in all good resolutions, in all holy aspirations. His spirit was now constantly seeking her spirit, through the infinite regions of space, with a prayer for forgiveness. With their daughter pressed to his patient

bosom, he resolved to atone to *her* child for the wrong done to the mother.

And Juliette? What were his thoughts and purposes toward her? To try to love her, to win her esteem and confidence by years of unswerving integrity, and then to win her away from vanity and idols to a good life and a true worship. And as this thought developed, grew, and strengthened in his soul, he was conscious of a new interest in his beautiful wife—an interest that would have grown into a true affection, but *the inevitable law of Retribution was upon him.* He had sinned, and through his sin he must suffer, and that not by the arbitrary sentence of a despot, but by the natural action of an equitable law. He had planted thorns—shall he gather flowers? He had filled his cup with gall and vinegar—shall any chemistry turn it to milk or wine? He had sown treachery—he must reap nothing but distrust

Yes, his wife did distrust him. She did more—she suspected him. Julie had been ill, but was now better. She did not believe that it was this wailing and puling infant that kept him in the nursery all day and half the night. She did not believe that it was mere moral approbation and gratitude for her devotion to his child that led him to draw Minny up to his side, and, with a kind and fatherly air, stroke the soft ringlets of the beautiful quadroon, while the colour would steal into Minny's drooping face, and tears gather in her downcast eyes. She did not believe, though it was true, that this was merely a grateful emotion of the poor girl's sensitive nature—that a similar mark of kindness coming from her mistress would have affected her in the same way.

With all her caution and all her policy this concealed fire could not burn inwardly for ever without an outbreak. At last it came.

"Aunt Agnes," an old coloured woman who shared Minny's labours in the nursery, had seen with her keen eyes the whole state of affairs.

One evening, when General Dent had been more than usually kind in his demonstrations of approbation to the poor quadroon, when Juliette had been so far thrown off

her guard as to express in her countenance the cruel malignity of her heart, when they had both—that is, General Dent and Juliette—left the room, this old woman took hold of Minny's wrist, and, pressing it earnestly, said very impressively,—

"Look here, honey, don't you be so over and 'bove ready to wait on master."

Minny looked into her face to discover her meaning.

"Mind, I tell you, now. She 's a-watching of you."

The innocent girl still looked perplexed. The old woman squeezed her wrist significantly, and, stooping down her face close to Minny's, whispered,—

"Jealousy 's adders, honey! it 's wipers, it is. Take care, now. You look out, mind, I tell you. 'Fore wit 's better 'an after wit Take a fool's advice; jealousy 's adders, honey!"

Perceiving that the pure and simple mind of the young girl could not receive her meaning, she explained herself in terms not to be misunderstood Then you should have seen the innocent and sensitive girl; you should have seen how the "eloquent blood" arose over bosom, cheeks, and brow to the very edges of her hair; how the tears suffused her eyes as she turned away without one word. There was no indignation at this cruel injustice, this degrading suspicion. Minny was not what is called a spirited girl. Timid, gentle, and sensitive, she turned away from the coarse old woman, bowed to the dust with a sense of abject humiliation.

It was very wrong in the old woman to suggest the idea of evil by breathing a suspicion—very wrong, and fraught with much misery to all concerned.

The next day, about noon, little Julie was sitting, propped up in her crib, playing with her toys. Minny sat by her side, helping to amuse her. Mrs. Dent (I have called her "Juliette," and "her," and "his wife," all this time, because I hated to give her our Hester's name, but it must come at last)—Mrs. Dent, who was paying her formal daily visit to the nursery, was lounging in an easy chair, listlessly turning over the leaves of her favourite, Rochefoucauld. The door opened, and General Dent

came in. As usual, by force of habit, without a thought, Minny sprang up and set a chair for him, and, taking his hat and gloves, was carrying them across the room to the table, when suddenly, as by a quick and painful recollection, or a sharp pang, she started, paused, faltered—the colour rushed to her face—she gave a hurried glance at her mistress—Mrs. Dent was looking keenly at her—she dropped the hat and gloves, covered her burning face with both hands, and burst into tears. How much shamed innocence looks like guilt sometimes!

Had a bombshell fallen into the room the effect could not have been greater on one of the party. Juliette's face grew pale, paler, whiter than marble — her blue lips parted away from her set teeth—her eyes glittered, and a furrow, black as night, doubled between her eyebrows. "'Twas confirmation strong as proof from Holy Writ" to her.

"Leave the room, minion:" at last she said, in a low and husky tone. Minny obeyed General Dent, with his back toward them, was occupied with his child, and did not perceive this short passage. Juliette arose, passed into her own apartment, and rang the bell.

"Inform the housekeeper that I would speak with her," said she to the servant who obeyed her summons.

Mrs. Wimsat soon entered.

"Mrs. Wimsat, I have sent for you to request you to send Minny Dozier to the quarters—to the quarters of the field negroes—with a note to the overseer, directing him to set her to work to-morrow with the others. I have also to request that you will seek out a proper person to supply her place in the nursery."

This cruel order was given with the greatest apparent composure. Mrs. Wimsat evidently either did not comprehend it, or she distrusted her own ears.

"Did you hear me?" asked the lady.

"Yes, madam, but I do not think I quite understand you."

Mrs. Dent repeated the order with great distinctness

"Now, I presume, I make myself intelligible?"

"Yes, madam, I think I understand you; but pardon

me, Mrs. Dent—Minny Dozier! the poor child is no more fit to handle a hoe, and work out in the hot broiling sun, than—than you are, madam (meaning no offence); but she is such a delicate, gossamer little thing—such a sweet, beautiful, refined little creature—dear me! Mrs. Dent, it would kill her in a week—to live in the dirty quarters too!—and she so delicately brought up. Why, her former mistress, the late Mrs. Dent, you know, used to take as much care of her as though she had been her own dear sister. Indeed, madam, I hope you will think better of it. What has Minny done? I will make her come and beg your pardon."

"There is no necessity, Mrs. Wimsat. She has done nothing. I simply dislike her about the house, and desire that she be transferred to the fields. You will be so good as to attend to it."

"But, for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Dent!"

"I am not accustomed to hold a controversy with people in my employment, Mrs. Wimsat. I give you an order, and I expect it to be obeyed. You may withdraw."

Mrs. Wimsat left the room, muttering to herself, "What ails her? This was always the way. There was Hester Grey, descended from one of the oldest and proudest families in Virginia, with some of the best blood of old England running in her veins; there was Hester Grey, distinguished for the perfect simplicity of her character and manners; and here 's this upstart, Juliette Summers—this beggar—this Italian foundling, who, now that General Dent has married her, assumes the airs of an empress. It 's always the way—'set a beggar on horseback, and he 'll ride to the old Nick.' However, as General Dent may be presumed to have something to do with his fields, if he hasn't with his house, I shall see him upon this subject of putting a new hand to the hoe." Which she accordingly did. General Dent received this piece of information with unfeigned surprise, and immediately sought the presence of his wife for an explanation. Juliette was reclining in a large chair in her chamber. As soon as she saw him enter she arose, walked to the farthest window, and looked out. He came in speaking,—

"Juliette, my dear, I have come to inquire into poor Minny's offence, and to intercede for her. What has the poor little fool done to deserve banishment?"

She turned her white face upon him. He positively started with the shock her look gave him. He was much alarmed. He thought that she was suddenly ill.

"Why, Juliette! my dearest Juliette! What is this—how long have you been thus—what is the matter?" inquired he, anxiously, as he approached very near her.

She receded from him, and raised her hand with an abjuring gesture.

"I have no accusation to make, General Dent!" she muttered in a deep and husky tone.

"No accusation to make! Juliette, I insist upon knowing what is all this?" said he, still following her. "My dearest love, tell me."

She sprang away from him with a sudden bound, and held up her hand, and exclaimed,—

"Don't touch me!"

"Don't touch you. Are you mad, Juliette? I really do believe you are. What do you mean? I am astounded at this conduct. Now I see that you are not ill in body, at least, but what is the matter? I absolutely insist upon knowing."

Again he approached her, again she sprang out of his reach, and, gaining possession of a pistol that always lay loaded on his dressing-table, she exclaimed,—

"Don't touch me! As God in heaven hears me, if you do I'll kill you!"

And now he thought her mad without a doubt. He threw himself into a chair, leaned back, and contemplated her for a moment—the beautiful fury! There she stood, her form drawn up to its proudest height, her head thrown back, her face blanched, her brow corrugated, her large eyes contracted and glittering, and her blue lips drawn tightly over her set teeth. Athwart this stormy face her wild hair, all out of curl, was blown by the breeze from the open window.

"Put down that pistol!"

She smiled derisively.

"Put down that pistol, I say!"

She laughed scornfully.

"Will you put that weapon down, Juliette?"

"Are you afraid of it?" sneered she.

"Pshaw! Give it me."

"I will not."

He approached her to take it. She stepped back. Again the devil flew into her face, blazed into her eyes, and nerved her heart and hand. She raised the weapon.

"Stand off, and hear me, I say. I told you that I had no accusation to make. I have none!"

She lowered the weapon as he sank into a chair. She went on with rapid vehemence,—

"Ernest Dent, I have loved you better than God—more than heaven—more than my own soul. It is faint to say that I would have died for you, although I would, the cruellest death. More! I would have lost heaven! lived in hell! sold my Saviour! imbrued my hands in kindred blood, and thought the deed a merit, if it gave you pleasure! I knew no law, human or divine, above this law of love. That was the way I have loved you, Ernest Dent. And every day we have lived together I have loved you more and more—since we were married, oh, how much more than before! Since! Oh, Ernest, you know ——"

Here her voice faltered and sank.

"God! this is maddening!" she groaned. Then, recovering herself, she dashed the wild hair back from her brow, and said,—

"This is not the language of exaggeration. The words are pressed as the life-blood from my heart—are struck as sparks of fire from my brain! I shall go mad—I shall die! I know now what it is that fills the hospitals with maniacs, and the graves with suicides!"

"Why, of course, just such unbridled passions as yours."

"My unbridled passions! It is well for you—oh! is it not?—first to drive me mad by falsehood, and then to upbraid me with unbridled passions!"

"By falsehood!" She had broken her stern resolution of silence upon the subject of her supposed wrongs

Passion had borne down and overswept pride, as an advancing sea throws down and thunders over an embankment; and words and reproaches came—fierce, furious, and impetuous—as the rushing of many waters. It is often thus with proud, passionate natures like hers. As long as they keep silence they can exercise a degree of self-control; but, as soon as the least break in the dike of silence is made, the tide of passion and of words comes rushing in, sweeping all before it.

Her whole expression had changed. Her face was now flushed to crimson—the veins on her forehead distended—her eyes dilated, blazing. General Dent sat there, contemplating her with something more of composure than he would have gazed upon a tragic actress in the part of Medea. She had conjured away the demon Ennui from his soul; and anything that would do that, even pain, was welcome. He was interested, excited. She went on, lashing herself to fury,—

"To be loved thus for a day, and then cast off! *I* could not, cannot change. Had you grown old, ugly, and decrepit—had you been steeped in poverty, crime, and shame to the lips—had all the power of heaven and the malice of hell conspired to heap disaster upon your devoted head—*I* should have clung to you still and ever while a pulse of vitality beat in the wreck, so you had been guiltless towards me. For me there was but one way in which you could have sinned—and *I*—I might have expected it. You have so sinned, and now may I perish eternally the day that I forgive you! May I die the day I suffer you to lay your hand upon my person again!"

He did not love her or believe her enough to be very much disturbed at this declaration. Placing his hands upon his knees, he leaned forward, and said,—

"'Variety is the spice of life,' and this is one of the spices without a doubt. Juliette, will it please you now to specify the nature of my offence, for I pledge you my word that I have not the slightest clue to your meaning?"

In a voice of concentrated rage she uttered one word,—

"The quadroon!"

He sank back in his chair and laughed now—such a

good, hearty, genial, rattling laugh. That laugh—his seeming shameless effrontery—stung her to madness. A greyness crept over her face, her eyes contracted and glittered, her teeth set, her hands clenched—she became awfully still and rigid. As soon as he could speak for laughing he said,—

"Minny Dozier! Why, my good Juliette, you had really alarmed me! Your earnestness had frightened me into the idea that I had somehow, by somnambulism or witchcraft, been led to the involuntary perpetration of some horrid crime; and now 'the mountain has brought forth a mouse!' Little Minny Dozier! Nonsense, my love! Jealous of your maid?"

The interest and excitement of this scene had now aroused him. He approached to catch the beautiful revolted spirit to his bosom; she sprang from him; he would not be repulsed. She was frenzied now; she raised the weapon; he laughed, and attempted to seize it; she fired; he recoiled, staggered, and fell into the chair. She dropped the pistol and approached him. She had come quite to her senses now.

He waved her off, while he stanched the blood that was flowing from his temple.

"No, you have not hurt me," said he, pointing to where the bullet, having grazed his forehead, had entered into the wall behind him. He was quite pale and still. It was an awful thing to see that great, strong man looking so blanched, ghastly, and grim—not from a reflex fear of the imminent danger he had escaped (his dauntless intrepidity shut out that feeling), but from horror at the crime his wife had so nearly perpetrated, and of which he could not have believed her, even in her frenzy, capable. Even now there was a blessed doubt on his mind as to whether the weapon had not gone off in her hand. She had receded, and was leaning back against the wall, facing him, quite overwhelmed, her hands hanging down, her head drooped upon her bosom, her eyes fixed upon the carpet.

At last, without excitement and without haste, he arose, walked out of the room, descended the stairs, and left the house.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

"Sir, you are very welcome to our house:
It must appear in other ways than words,
Therefore I scant this breathing courtesy."—SHAKSPEARE.

After General Dent had left the presence of his wife, in crossing the hall he encountered Minny Dozier. He called her, but the blood flushed to the girl's brow, and she turned away. He stepped after her, and then she stood with downcast eyes and folded hands, meekly waiting his pleasure. He took from his pocket a small packet, and, placing it in her hands, said,—

"Minny, I have had this for you since yesterday. It is a deed of manumission. Take it, child—you are free. But I cannot start you penniless in the world. You will find in the same packet five hundred dollars. If your affection for your little charge is strong enough to enable you to bear, and to compensate for, all that will now be unpleasant in your position, remain here, as her nurse and governess, at a fair salary. If not—if you feel that you cannot endure what you may be called upon to bear, why then I advise you to go to one of the northern cities, where your rare musical talents will insure you a handsome independence. I will procure you an escort, and furnish you with letters to some friends there. You can think of this for a day or two, Minny, and then let me know."

Minny waited until he finished speaking, then, sinking down at his feet, she raised his hands, and bowed her brow upon them, and murmured her thanks amid tears, and in broken melody. He passed on, mounted his horse, and rode to the village to meet the mail-stage, expecting to receive letters which would require to be answered by return post, and would therefore demand to be despatched within the hour. He reached the post-office before the

arrival of the mail. At last the lumbering old vehicle drove up, the horn was blown, and the postmaster's man turned out to receive the mail. General Dent walked to the door and looked out. He observed two passengers in the stage—a foreign-looking, dark-complexioned, moustached young man, and a most beautiful child. The opening of the mail now summoned him within to receive his letters. Having broken the seals and read them, he went to the next hotel, and called for paper, pen, and ink to reply to them. As he sat himself down in the parlour to write the young man with the lovely child entered. The young man rang the bell, and, when the landlord came in, inquired,—

"Can I obtain a carriage and horse in the village, and a guide, as far as the Vale, the seat of General Ernest Dent?"

"My carriage and horses are at your disposal, sir, and for a guide General Dent himself is in your presence, and will be returning to the Vale this evening."

General Dent, now rising from his seat, advanced to where they were talking. The young man walked forward to meet him. Bowing gracefully, he said,—

"I have the honour of meeting General Dent of the Vale?"

"That is my style, sir."

"My name is Guillieme La Chappelle, of the opera, Paris."

General Dent, at first hearing the name, looked perplexed; then, suddenly recollecting to whom it belonged, he extended his hand, saying,—

"Ah! yes. Happy to see you, sir. Landlord, a private room and dinner." Then, turning again to the young man, he said, "And that beautiful child is ——"

"My daughter and Erminie's."

The re-entrance of the landlord to show them into a private apartment arrested the conversation. He conducted them to a parlour on the second floor, and, closing the door after him, left them alone. The young man turned with energy to General Dent, and, seizing his hand, asked, hurriedly and anxiously,—

"Now, General Dent, you seem to have heard my name before, seem to know who I am: what of my wife?"

"She is alive, in good health, and happy as her long separation from you and her child, and her uncertainty of your fate, would permit her to be. She is at the Vale with my lady."

"Thank Heaven! I had heard as much on my way, tracing her hither, but I rejoice to have it confirmed from your lips."

Then, after awhile, the young man essayed to speak again, but his voice choked, and his brow flushed to the darkest crimson. General Dent divined his thoughts, and with infinite tact and delicacy replied to them, without once approaching the bitter feature in them, thus:—

"Madame La Chappelle is at this moment uncertain whether she shall remain at the Vale in the capacity of governess to my daughter, or go to one of the northern cities to sing at private concerts. Happily sir, your arrival will obviate the necessity of either course."

The young man felt his magnanimity strongly. He started up, walked rapidly up and down the floor, then stopping suddenly before him, seized and wrung his hands, exclaiming.—

"General Dent, my heart is swelling—bursting with its emotions of gratitude. General Dent! what shall I do for you? Oh! tell me, tell me, what shall I do for you?"

General Dent replied, calmly and coolly, "You owe me nothing at all, sir! Any service that I have been enabled to render your wife is more than repaid by the affectionate care that she has bestowed upon my only child. Her physician and myself think that, but for the devoted care of Erminie, she must soon have followed her mother to heaven."

Dinner was now served, and they drew to the table. The young man, removing the little girl's ermine pelisse, and hat and plume, consigned her to the charge of the landlord, to be taken to the women of his house for care. When the dinner was removed, and the wine placed upon the table, General Dent inquired of his young guest how it had happened that he never saw, or, if he saw, never

attended to, any of the advertisements and letters that had been sent to discover him. He answered by briefly telling his story, or that part of it intervening between the parting with his wife on board the ship, and his finding the clue to her existence and place of abode.

"I parted with Erminie on board the packet ship Neptune, bound for Hâvre. We had a long, tedious passage, interrupted by dead calms, or opposed by adverse gales. It was three months before we cast anchor in the port of Hâvre. I hurried at once to Paris, and found my father ill of a cancer in the chest. His disease was variable and tedious. Now he would be brought to the very verge of the grave, and now, reviving, would give us hopes of his ultimate recovery. Thus months wore on. I wrote by every packet to Erminie or to her father. I could not account for the fact of my unanswered letters. At last, about three months after my arrival, and six from the day of my sailing from Havana, I addressed a letter to an acquaintance (I had no friend) in Havana. I waited three or four months for a reply to this letter, but received none. I grew intensely anxious. I wished to fly to Havana, but my father was sinking fast, and I could not leave him, except to sing at night at the opera. I was compelled to do that to pay our daily expenses, for my father and myself, like nearly all our profession, never had a franc in bank. I continued to write to Monsieur Alphonse Dozier—to Erminie—to various acquaintances in Cuba—to no purpose; not one line could I get in reply. At length my father died, just one year after my arrival in Paris. He had lingered much longer than we could have hoped. A week after his funeral I sailed in the packet ship Xyphias, bound for the West Indies, via the Bermudas. You have, doubtless, read all the particulars of that dreadful catastrophe, the burning of the Xyphias off the coast of Bermuda. In the middle watch of the night we were alarmed by the cry of 'Fire!' How that fire originated it is impossible to say. Every means was used to arrest the flames, in vain. They were fast approaching the powder magazine. The crew, the strongest of them, seized the boats and escaped for their lives. The

passengers—the aged, the women, and the children—were in the cabin; the captain and officers making every exertion possible to save the lives of all; but, without the assistance of their crew, little could be done. Signal-guns were fired, but not heard, or not answered. I think no ship was near us, and the part of the coast ahead was distant from any port. I swam to the shore. On the beach I found a fisherman's small skiff moored. Two oars were in it; I jumped into it, unfastened it, took, and rapidly plying the oars reached the ship. Well, we succeeded in saving some lives. By that time the inhabitants of the island were aroused, and approached the shore with torches. But there were no boats except the one I was using. In my last trip to the ship, while I was in the act of assisting into the boat an old man (who had insisted on being the last to be taken off, because he said that he was old and alone in the world, and that his life was the least valuable on board), the fire reached the powder magazine, and the ship was blown up, with the terrific noise and force of an exploded planet. Thrown to a great distance off into the sea, stunned, bruised, burnt, but not dead, I must have sunk and risen again, and finally floated or swam, I scarcely know which, to a still greater distance, for I was picked up by a Spanish ship bound to the Cape of Good Hope. We were three months in getting there; another month passed before I could obtain a passage home to the West Indies; and so, with unprecedented difficulties and impediments, it was two years from the day of my leaving Havana that I again reached its port. I went immediately to the Dell. Imagine my surprise at finding it in the possession of strangers. Imagine my horror at the atrocities that had been perpetrated upon my wife and child. At this moment I believe it was only Providence that withheld me from breaking the neck of the fellow in possession there. I comforted myself with the assurance that I should soon make him disgorge all his ill-gotten wealth. The whole property, with the exception of the few slaves sold with Erminie—with Erminie!—great God! my heart must *ever* burn at the thought. I said that I would soon make him disgorge his ill-gotten pos-

sessions. I had the means of doing it, for the last will and testament of Monsieur Alphonse Dozier was in my own possession—a will first of all acknowledging the quadroon, Erminie Dozier, as his daughter, and setting her free, and then endowing her with all his property, real estate and personal. This will, drawn up with legal precision by a lawyer of Havana, witnessed by two gentlemen of note, had never left my person. Affecting, as it did, the legitimacy, the fortune, and the personal liberty of my wife and child, this will had been enveloped in a water and fire-proof cover, and bound to my heart, before I tempted the sea. I took possession of the property, in the right of my wife, without difficulty. I made every inquiry as to the fate of Erminie. I went to New Orleans, and there lost all trace of her. The trader who had bought and sold her was dead. I travelled all through the southern states, had advertisements inserted in all the southern papers, to no purpose. Thus the third year since my parting from her passed. I should have told you that whenever I travelled Erminie's daughter (whom I had found still at the Dell, in charge of the old woman with whom her mother had left her) went with me. I was in despair. I had never dreamed of the possibility of her having been conveyed to the north; it so rarely, so very rarely happens that—that slaves" (he choked at the term) "are purchased at the south and carried north. Well, sir, one day it happened that I had a box of clothes sent to my order by a New York merchant tailor. I was at the Dell at that time. Many layers of paper lay between the clothes and the top of the box. They were old papers. On the top paper I was struck at the sight of my own name, and read with feelings of intense joy this advertisement:—

"'If this notice should meet the eye of Guillieme La Chappelle, formerly of the Paris opera, or attract the attention of any one who may be acquainted with the address of that gentleman, he is hereby informed that Messrs. Greenfield and Barry, attorneys at law, Richmond, are in possession of facts of the utmost possible importance relative to the family of the said Guillieme La Chappelle.

Personal application, or a letter addressed to Messrs. G. and B., will meet with prompt attention.'

"I looked at the date of the paper. It bore date three years before. This somewhat damped my new-born joy. Nevertheless, I took my daughter, threw myself on board of a packet, reached Norfolk after a passage of twenty days, posted through to Richmond, called the same hour of my arrival upon Messrs. Greenfield and Barry, your agents in the affair, obtained your address, and am here."

Touching the bell as he finished speaking, the landlord entered.

"Have my little daughter brought in if you please.'

The landlord bowed retired, and soon returned with the little girl, and, placing her at her father's side, left the room again. Guillieme La Chappelle stroked the little one's bright black ringlets, and, stooping, whispered low,—

"Myrrha, go and kneel and kiss yonder gentleman's hand; he saved your mother."

The little one obeyed timidly. General Dent now arose, saying,—

"Monsieur La Chappelle, you feel impatient, doubtless, to meet your wife after so long an absence. I regret sincerely that domestic circumstances of a most painful nature prevent the pleasure I should feel in tendering and pressing upon your acceptance the hospitality of the Vale. I have, however, despatched a note to our housekeeper, apprising her of your arrival, and requesting her gently to break the matter to Erminie, and then to bring her hither to meet you; and now, if I am not greatly deceived, yonder comes my old family carriage, and your wife is in it. Good day for the present, sir."

And, not wishing to remain to embarrass the meeting of the long-severed pair, General Dent withdrew.

He met Minny in the passage-way, leaning for support upon the arm of Mrs. Wimsat. She trembled violently when she saw him, and gasped out,—

"Oh! is this true, General Dent?"

"It is true, my child. Compose yourself—you are fainting. Water, landlord!"

The water was brought. He made Minny drink some,

and then she passed slowly up the stairs, trembling at every step, and holding for support by the balustrades. General Dent had called Mrs. Wimsat back when she would have followed her. As Minny at length reached the landing she caught sight of her husband, who sprang and caught her as she sank into his arms, exclaiming,—

"So many long years, Guillieme! So many long, long, long ——" and fainted.

He bore her into the room, and, setting her down, kissed her back to life. She opened her eyes as she murmured with a sigh,—

"One could bear trouble, could bear the loss of dear ones, if only dreams would not come and cheat them."

"You are not dreaming, fairest, fondest Minny! My nightingale, you are not dreaming!" and he stooped to kiss her again.

She put up her hand deprecatingly.

"Oh! no; don't, don't kiss me! It was always your kiss that waked me up to misery when I dreamed of you before. Keep still, oh!" she whispered, very low, "keep still; don't move, don't move—not yet. Oh! not yet; and, hush! that is my little child—steal her close to me—take care—please take care—don't wake me. I would not wake for the world now. She has your sweet eyes, Guillieme; but I am afraid to talk to her. I should be sure to wake up if I spoke to her. Oh! Father in heaven, please let me die in this sleep, in this blessed, blessed dream!" And she burst into a passion of tears.

He let her sob on, thinking *that* the best and quickest relief. She wept herself quiet, and then, looking up at him with sudden familiarity, she said,—

"Why, Guillieme, this is you—ain't it?" And, throwing her arms around his neck, dropped her head upon his shoulder, and broke into a fit of hysterical laughter. He stroked and smoothed her hair tenderly. Raising her head, she said, "Let me look into your face—your dear old face! Oh, yes! isn't it you? Lift my baby up here—my baby! Oh! hasn't she grown? She is a little girl now. Little girl, do you know me?" She paused, and looked intently at the child, who was gazing in surprise at

her agitated face. "Little girl, do you know me? Oh, Guillieme! she does not know me! She does not know me! Think of that! She does not know her own mother! I am a stranger to her!" And again she burst into tears.

"Kiss and hug her, my Minny, and she will know you in an hour. Sleep with her in your arms to-night, my love! and to-morrow she will scarcely know that she has ever been without you."

But Minny was already devouring her child with passionate kisses.

"You have not inquired her name yet, my Minny."

"No," said Minny, taking breath from her occupation. "What *is* her name?"

"She had never been christened. I called her Myrrha, for the sake of calling her something, until we should meet, and you should name her."

"Myrrha, is that a fancy name?"

"Yes, my Minny."

"Not the name of any you loved?"

"No, dearest."

"And you are not particularly attached to that name?"

"No, love, no."

"Well, then, call her Hester; *do* call her Hester."

"Certainly, my Minny, if you wish it. Who *is* Hester?"

"My guardian angel! my guardian angel, whose intercession in heaven has brought about this meeting! She was General Dent's first wife. All his large property came through her. She died two years ago, at twenty-one years old. She left her baby in my care, and promised, if permitted, to watch over us both; and that, if her spirit might crave a boon from the court of heaven, that boon should be this meeting."

"Then call her Hester, dear love; and when she cannot comprehend God, bid her pray to Hester."

Why prolong this scene? Who cannot follow in imagination the little, re-united, joyful family through the hours, too blissful for eating or sleeping, that immediately followed their meeting? The next morning (having the night previous bidden adieu to Mrs. Wimsat and General Dent)

they set out for Norfolk, whence, in a few days, they sailed for Havana. They reached the Dell, where, reader, they still live prosperous and happy, and surrounded by a large family. Let us return to the Vale, and to the wretched Juliette.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FALSE RECONCILIATION.

"Mine after-life! What is mine after-life?
My day is closed! The gloom of night is come!
A hopeless darkness settles o'er my fate."—JOANNA BAILLIE.

"The greatest attribute of Heaven is mercy,
And 'tis the crown of justice and the glory,
Where it may kill with right, to save with pity."
BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

"With groundless fears she thus her soul deceives;
What frenzy dictates, jealousy believes."—GAY.

SPELL-BOUND, she suffered him to go, without attempting to recall him. Soon after she heard the clatter of his horse's hoofs as he galloped away from the gate, and then she sank—that selfish, guileful, and intriguing woman—that fierce, proud, imperious spirit—she sank down upon the spot where he had left her in the weakness of utter wretchedness.

He was gone! She felt that she had lost him whom she loved so passionately. The bitter, the irrevocable words had been spoken—a deed never to be forgotten or forgiven had been attempted. He was gone! What a heavy despair fell upon her soul! The sun of her life had set, and left her world in darkness. Where was her anger now—and her jealousy? Buried in the deep despair of her loneliness—gone, as is gone the passion of the homicide who sees his victim dead before him. *She* gazed upon the corpse of her murdered peace. Was this Juliette? Ah, yes! Bad as she was, she was a woman, and loved; and what woman, the proudest and fiercest, can bear her hearth and home and heart made desolate,

and by her own rash hand? She was a woman, and her woman's nature amply avenged itself. Her anguish was as deep and hopeless as her anger had been fierce and deadly. He was gone! O Heaven! was this a fearful dream? Oh! that she could wake, and find this to have been a hideous vision of the night! She half hoped she might. She had dreamed dreams before *almost* as dreadful, and much, *very* much more *distinct*—awful dreams, that had seemed so real—and she had waked to peace and joy. Might not this horror be an unreal vision? She would try to wake up. Could she wake now? Oh! if she *could* wake! She wrung her hands; she twisted her fingers in her hair, and tore it. It was no dream; it was a tremendous reality. She *had* spoken those bitter words; she *had* attempted that horrible crime. There, in the scorched and broken plastering, right before her, stood the accusing witness of her frenzy! Oh! she would give her life, her hopes of heaven, to recall those bitter words, that monstrous deed. Impossible! It was all over, then. Do not misunderstand her. This was not the remorse of a sinner who had offended God, but the frenzied despair of a devotee who had thrown down and demolished her own idol. Day declined, yet there she cowered still. How slowly crept the shades of night into that desolate room, once *their* room, now only *hers;* once the scene of the sweetest memories and associations, now bearing on its walls the witness of her deadly attack! That desolate room, how slowly crept the shades of night into its dreary space! Oh! the intolerable anguish of her soul through that miserable night! Endless night, brooding over a boundless desert, was not more dreary than her soul.

The clock struck twelve. It was midnight without and within. The sun would rise upon the world again. Would day ever come to her heart? All the household were buried in sleep.

Hark!

That was his footstep! It came into the hall, passed into the drawing-room, and paused. He had not deserted the house yet. Thank Heaven for that! God bless him for that! But, oh! the impassable gulf that yawned

between them—the immeasurable distance that separated them! It seemed to her already that weary *years* had passed since the stormy scene of the morning. A desire to go and look upon him once more took possession of her heart—once more—perhaps he would leave again in the morning, and then she would never see him again. She arose—that proud woman! and, all disordered and dishevelled as she was, stole from her room. She glided down the stairs into the dark passage-way, where the light from the drawing-room was gleaming through the chinks of the door. She approached and looked upon the scene within. There were no candles in the room. The bright, fitful light came from the glowing fire in the grate. General Dent was standing on the rug, with his hands clasped behind him, and his back to the fire. The lurid glare of the fire, behind and below him, cast up the shadow of his form nearly to the ceiling, giving it a frightful and repellent look, and casting up the shadows of his features the wrong way, giving them a weird and ghost-like expression. She sunk there at the door, and gazed stealthily and in anguish upon the man toward whom her whole being tended with an almost irresistible force—the man whose affection, now that it was lost to her for ever, had become of such inestimable value; the man to whom, under God, she owed every blessing she possessed on earth—to whom she owed all love and duty, yet against whose life she had just raised her hand. Horror! could she endure this thought? Haughty and selfish though she was, could she endure this thought? While she gazed the flickering flame of the fire died away, and the dancing shadows on his face were still. She looked upon his countenance; it was very stern, but it was the sternness of grief, not the sternness of resentment. An impulse, like forked lightning, darted into the gloom of her sky. She would fly to him; she would grovel at his feet; she would implore pardon. She started to her feet with the first impulse; but ah! her dastard heart! it was trembling, fainting, dying in her bosom. And her traitor limbs! they were failing under her. She leaned against the door for support an instant, and in another she was at his feet, clasping his knees,

bathing his hands with her tears, imploring pardon, entreating him to do what seemed good to him with her, but not to drive her from him, and not to desert her.

Yes, this was Juliette—no more a fiend, no more a sorceress,—

> "But e'en a woman! and commanded
> By such poor passion as the maid that milks
> And does the meanest chares."

Such a tamer is love and grief!

And Ernest Dent—how did he receive this penitence? He stooped and raised her, supported her an instant in his arms, while he glanced around for the nearest chair, seated himself, and drew her on his knees, and laid her head against his bosom, parting the tangled hair from her pale brow, and wiping the fast-flowing tears from her haggard cheeks.

But he did not kiss her, nor press her to his bosom. He pitied her, and he forgave her; but he did not, could not love her yet. The tempest in her bosom was subsiding, but had not yet subsided; and still she raved about forgiveness, and still she abjured the idea of parting.

"Forgive you, Juliette! I do, as I hope to be forgiven," at last he said; "it is not for me, sinful man that I am, needing mercy as I do, to withhold it from you."

"Ah, yes! you will forgive me! you will forgive me! but you will forgive and *leave* me."

"Leave you, Juliette! Leave you, my young, fierce, stormy Juliette, to beat your soul out against the rocks in this world! Leave *you* to your own guidance! How little you know me to think so! Why, I never even *dreamed* of such a thing."

Raising her from her resting-place on his bosom, he set her before him, and looking with a sad, earnest, almost breathless gaze upon her beautiful though haggard face, he murmured, as if to himself,—

"Leave you! Why, what, in that case, ever *would* become of you? With your beauty and temperament, what *would* become of you?"

She dropped her weary head upon his chest again, and whispered,—

"Oh! then, Ernest, kiss me once more; fold your arms about me, and let me *feel* that you have forgiven and can love me still."

He did fold her in a close embrace; he seemed to feel for her so much; he seemed by sympathy to suffer all *her* remorse. What a depth of forgiveness, of pity, and of tenderness was expressed in the words he whispered so earnestly in his deep tones,—

"Poor Juliette! my poor Juliette!" while he gently smoothed her disordered hair and dress.

This gentle and generous forgiveness, and for such an enormous offence—it would have subdued a rock—it subdued Juliette. Never had she been in such a gentle, womanly mood; never had she been so softened, so *nearly* changed.

Deep as had been her despair when she sank at his feet, great as had been the revulsion of her feelings as he raised her to his bosom, it was yet not joy. The memory of her awful offence was too vividly present with her. It was a stronger, deeper feeling of astonishment, gratitude, and veneration—at *first;* but her feelings soon changed, as you will see. Now she murmured,—

"How *can* you forgive me? Where can you find mercy for me?"

"Where? From my own experience of sin and suffering, dear wife; because I know the smart of every wound that is bleeding in your heart. Besides, even if I did not pity your anguish with my whole soul, I have too much need of mercy myself to refuse it to you."

Stroking back her hair, and gazing gravely on her face, he resumed:—

"No; I am twenty years older and stronger and harder than you are, and should be twenty years wiser, which is doubtful. But this I would have you believe, Juliette; and upon this rock I would have you found your faith, and in this truth I would have you find your peace—that your husband is quite strong enough to bear with you; that though you may yield to ungovernable passion, that though you may draw down *every other* evil fate upon your head, yet, while you live, and he lives, you cannot cast yourself

beyond the pale of his care and protection; no more, with deep reverence be it spoken, than *he* can throw himself beyond the limits of his Maker's providence."

It was no wonder that she loved him so much; for, now that his mind had returned to its normal condition, he presented these great attractions for a nature like hers—*strength* and *self-possession*. He continued:—

"Yes, Juliette, poor child of passion and impulse, it shall henceforth be my care to guard you from your own impetuosity, as from all other dangers; and, Juliette, if I have no reproach to make you, and no warning to give you, it is because, in your wan and ghastly face, I see the anguish of your heart, and feel and know that the terrible lesson of this morning will not be lost upon you. You *now* know that the time for successful self-control is in the very first risings of emotion. It is a very common but a very dangerous practice to neglect these first emotions of malign affections because they are slight and vague, and thus permit them to grow until they become importunate or ungovernable. And, of all other emotions, should the very first spark of anger be quenched: for, of all other emotions, it is the quickest in subverting reason, and the most apt to be fatal in its consequences."

"Child of passion and of impulse" he had called her He did not know her to call her thus, although for once her ardent Italian temperament had "swamped" her keen and crafty Italian intellect. Her "anguish," too—how little did he guess that *all* this was the agony of alarmed passion, not the torture of a startled conscience; that she sickened with the thought of the man she had nearly lost, not with the fear of the God she had offended.

He forgave her freely. Doubtless, moral and physical courage enabled him thus to pardon and restore her. The *fears* of a weaker nature would have made him obdurate; and such a man would, probably, have charged his inflexibility to his moral sense. Is *your* moral sense shocked that he should have forgiven her so soon? *Do* understand him. His own heart was aching with the memory of a wrong done, and for which he could make no reparation; the wronged one was beyond his reach, so

that he could sympathise with what he supposed to be Juliette's remorse. Besides, there was something in his soul that demanded to suffer and to expiate; and in forgiving this woman, at once the cause and the punishment of his error; in bearing with her, in soothing her fancied remorse, in trying to love her and to improve her moral nature, he felt that he was making some slight reparation to one whom he had lost, and thus soothed the uneasiness of his conscience. This feeling engendered a sort of refined gratitude toward Juliette, and this sentiment fostered the germ of a true affection—an affection still destined to be killed by the blight of her distrust—yes, her *distrust*. You would have thought that, from the moment of their reconciliation, in the warmth of her gratitude, she would have banished as a crime from her soul every shadow of intruding suspicion. Ah! no; for no sooner had she felt herself indeed restored to his confidence and regard, no sooner was her mind free from this grief, than all her old suspicions came flowing back into her heart. Yes, even now, while she lay on his bosom, while he soothed and caressed her; even now, while receiving in silence this tender assurance of a full restoration, that should have given her peace and joy, she thought,—

"Ah! it is too true. *This proves it.* He could not thus pardon and restore me if he were not conscious of infidelity, consummated or intended, toward me. *He deceived Hester, his first angel wife. Can I even expect him to be true to me?*"

And, as she thought this, she groaned and turned her head from him. He mistook this gesture for an expression of remorse, and his very soul pitied her. Turning her face around again toward him, he kissed her tenderly, and said,—

"Do not take this to heart so bitterly, my love. You cannot recall what is past, but you can learn something from it. Thank God that you have escaped a crime, and pray God to enable you to subdue your impetuous nature. And now, dear Juliette, you must go to rest. You are quite haggard, poor child, and so nervous, too. Go to

your room, my love, and I will bring you a composing draught."

And Juliette retired to her own apartment. One would have thought that on returning to this room reconciled, after having left it in such utter despair, the happy revulsion of feeling would have thrown her upon her knees in gratitude to her Maker, if she had never knelt to him before; but no! the inexorable law of Retribution was upon her too—*she could not trust him.*

Thus the germ in their blossom of love and treachery had grown and ripened into the very apple of Sodom. She could *not* believe him! It was true he *seemed* sincere; but then she knew that so did she *seem* to be everything that was disinterested and true, when *she knew herself* to be all that was selfish and perfidious. Thus the self-knowledge of a bad nature produces only suspicion, while the self-knowledge of a good nature teaches charity. This latter clause of the truth is illustrated in the character of Ernest Dent. This untried soldier—this uncompromising advocate for intact morality—this severe rebuker of error—this rigid exacter of *perfect* truthfulness, *perfect* faith—this ascetic—this stoic—this Cato the Censor—this Zeno the Sublime, who could so sternly reprove his poor, little, loving, artless Hester for what she never dreamed of—a fancied suppression of the truth—this man had learned to forgive even an offence that would have taxed the patience of an angel—an offence that would have shocked the moral sense of an ordinary mortal into a doubt as to whether he really could or ought to pardon it.

Such a teacher and tamer are error and contrition! Juliette could not believe in this. Even with her almost superhuman craft and cunning, through her moral blindness, as well as through the illusions of passion, she was unable to comprehend this. The enchantress, under the influence of human passions, had become in capacity a human being. As she sought her pillow the scorpion of suspicion, stinging her heart, exasperated her to exclaim,—

"Oh! you are an adept! you are an adept, Ernest Dent! You may 'speak with the tongues of men and of angels,' but *I* know you—have had an opportunity of

knowing yo.!' Your words are all 'sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' You would deceive an angel. You *did* deceive an angel. Hester died without dreaming of your faithlessness. Satan only knows with what necromancy you used to seal up her eyes so thoroughly."

Juliette did not reflect that it was the holy and beautiful truthfulness and trustfulness of Hester's character—the breastplate of righteousness and faith—that had shielded her gentle and loving bosom from the shafts of treachery and the wounds of jealousy.

General Dent was soon by the side of her bed with a wine glass. She receiv d it from his hand, and, as he stepped back to close the door, that had been left ajar, she *covertly turned the contents of the glass upon the carpet.*

What horrible suspicion tortured her dark soul now?

"To-morrow, Juliette," said he, as he received the empty glass from her hand, "to-morrow we must have a good long talk. We have, since our return from France, lived too much apart—each, or at least I, too much absorbed in my own thoughts. This is not well. We must know each other better, for we have a long road to travel together, my love."

And upon the next day they did have a long talk. He tried to win her confidence—to elicit her thoughts and feelings. He imparted to her his own wishes and purposes in vain. She could neither comprehend nor credit him, although she affected to do both. A hollow peace, a superficial confidence was established between them; but the disease was too deeply seated. There was a radical want of esteem for, and trust in, each other. "Whatever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap;" and they were reaping the mildewed growth of passion and treachery. Through years of domestic wretchedness they lived, united by no tie of mutual affection or esteem, but fettered fast by pride, custom, and expediency—ay, and by passion, too, on Juliette's side, but a passion that only formed another element of misery in their lives, by being a perpetual goad to jealousy, which, again reacting on it, kept it alive. Every succeeding quarrel differed in this respect from their first—there was *less* of violence and

anger, and *more* of hatred and scorn in every subsequent conflict.

And this wretched life—made wretched by the jealousy and suspicions of his wife—lasted until her fierce, selfish, and cruel affection had entirely died out.

About this time Ernest Dent was re-elected to the Senate, and they went to Washington.

Every one has heard of, and many have experienced, the hinderances and obstacles that beset a Christian in his endeavours after a holy life. I do not know that the trials to which Ernest Dent was subjected were extraordinary; but the toil and anxiety—the trials of temper and of principle—the wear and tear of body and soul—of an ambitious man in political life, must be inconceivable to others.

This was the life of Ernest Dent *abroad*—domestic misery was his lot *at home*. You will not wonder, then, that his progress in Christian regeneration was slow, interrupted, and difficult, or that the profound serenity of his temper, and the candour and forbearance of his disposition, suffered much disturbance. He could not, upon all occasions, exercise the same forgiving spirit toward Juliette that we have seen him display in the first day of his awakened conscience, while his heart was subdued by a new penitence.

As Ernest Dent had thrown himself into political strife, so Juliette had given herself up to the allurements of fashionable society. She became "the bright particular star" in the constellation of beauty and fashion assembled at the seat of government every winter. Some few old persons are now living here who remember and speak of the almost fabulous charms of this Circe—of this strange syren, singular alike in the wonderful beauty and grace of her person; in the magnetic attractions of her glance—her tone—her touch; in the irresistible fascination of her manners; in the dazzling brilliance of her short, meteoric career; in the darkness of her crime, and in the horror of her doom. But I am anticipating. Her present vocation was to torment Ernest Dent for the sin into which she herself had led him.

And now, while I say this, it occurs to me that, to Ernest Dent, Hester and Juliette—the first, pure love, the last, insane passion—represented the principles of good and evil. To the first his faith had been pledged, and his allegiance was due; but she was plain, simple, quiet, quakerish, and unattractive; and he let her die. The second was bright, beautiful, alluring: he gave himself up to her fascinations, was bewildered, caught, and tortured. The parallel is perfect, as you will find, if you pursue it. Ernest Dent was beginning to know her now; he saw as deeply into the dark pit of her soul as was possible for his good nature to penetrate, and this insight gave him a sternness of manner and of feeling toward her that was exercised toward no one else. She began to hate him now. And thus they lived. To all the world else *he* was just, generous, and affable; to *her*, hard, cold, and exacting. To all the world else *she* was bright, graceful, and fascinating; to *him* she turned a face and figure dark, repulsive, and defiant. It had cost Ernest Dent a long, severe struggle to gain the high position he now held in the State; but he *had* gained it. It cost him now a hand-to-hand wrestle with opposition to keep his footing; but he *did* keep it with great "honour to himself," whatever might have been the advantage to others. What was it to him, however, though he had gained, with so much difficulty, great distinction? though he possessed the intellect, eloquence, and force of character to direct and control a senate or (no reflection) a mob? What happiness to him when a brilliant political victory had followed the volition of his mind? Except his party acquaintances, who cared, who was pleased, who really sympathised with him? What loving and beloved eyes lighted or suffused at the news? What loving and beloved voice thrilled upon his ear in tones of heartfelt gratulations, more earnest and sincere than the plaudits of a senate or a party? Not his wife's, with her keen intellect and haughty disdain, her biting satire, pointed sarcasm, and scornful laugh. For, when he would come home from just such a victory, "bearing his blushing honours thick upon him," they would be nipped quickly enough by "the cold and

killing frost" of her reception. Thus passed the weary years; and every year matured and perfected this beautiful, ardent, and unprincipled woman; and every year in the same ratio declined and aged this toiling, struggling, and ambitious man—this hard-working, ill-paid servant of "two masters" Her sun was ascending in unclouded splendour and glory to its meridian—his was declining in clouds and gloom. When she had grown indifferent, totally indifferent to his love, she left off raging and storming, and even, after a time, gave up sarcasm and bitterness, leaving him to the peaceful enjoyment of such intervals of repose as his arduous and anxious career permitted him. She gave her whole attention to the preservation of her perfect health and beauty, and to the analysis and development of certain demoniac powers and charms that she had hitherto possessed and used instinctively, but which she now understood and wielded with diabolical science; and woe to the purity of woman, or the honour of man, that encountered her baneful spell. Washington city and democratic America became too narrow a field, too plain a theatre, for the exercise of her powers. She wished to go to Europe; and this wish, intimated in the proper quarter, actually procured for her husband a second appointment abroad. This suited General Dent very well about this time, now that she had ceased for some months to goad and taunt him. He, not perceiving in this the decline of her love, had really begun to take some comfort in her society. So, in this promising state of affairs, to —— they went; and there the thunder-clouds, that had been gathering so long over this doomed man, broke in ruin on his head.

I had intended to have told you of the marriage of our ne'er-do-weel friend, Marcus Derby, and his little golden-haired Fanny; and how Marcus, with his usual happy faculty of getting into scrapes, had blundered into the good graces of his congressional district, and stumbled into a seat in the legislative councils of the nation; with the capers he cut "before high heaven," &c. But I have already trespassed too long; besides, I am fevered and excited with this dark Juliette, with whom one cannot even

deal without danger of receiving and communicating evil. She comes upon me like a fiend, or a fit of insanity; so I wish to hurry on to the end of her story, and be done with her.

CHAPTER XX.

RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

"All that could mind or sense delight
Were gather'd in that gorgeous spot."—BYRON.

"For his was not that blind, capricious rage,
A word can kindle and a word assuage,
But the deep workings of a soul unmix'd
With aught of pity where its wrath had fix'd."—BYRON.

"Then flash'd the living lightning from her eyes."—POPE.

"She left a name at which the world grew pale,
To point a moral or adorn a tale."—DR. JOHNSON.

To the residence of General Dent, the American minister at the court of ——, to a splendid palazzo near one of the most magnificent cities in the south of Europe, I wish to conduct you. It is an elysium, such as only may be found in southern Europe, where, to the lavish exuberance of nature, to all that is most sublime in mountain, forest, and cataract—most beautiful in lake, lawn, and grove—most fragrant and luxuriant in flowers, shrubs, and fruits—genius, wealth, and taste have added all that is most imposing in architecture, most elaborate in sculpture, most classic and elegant in statuary, and most poetic and *recherché* in painting. Through groves of orange and of citron trees, through sunny lawns, across whose light the shadows of the beautiful linden, the stately poplar, and the graceful willow, swayed and waving in the wind, float like clouds over sunny terraces, through gilded corridors, up marble stairs, and through long suites of elegant apartments, to the voluptuous bower of the houri of this paradise we go.

To enrich and ornament the splendid suite of apartments

occupied by this beautiful *épicurienne*, the rarest treasures of land and sea, the most precious productions of nature, and the most costly works of art, from the factories and workshops of Europe, from the looms of Persia and of Turkey, from the mines of Potosi and Golconda, and from the groves and gardens of Ceylon and the Maldive isles, had been collected. Through these superb rooms, through this scene of light and splendour, where everything that could charm the senses and delight the intellect was gathered, you wandered to her boudoir—the last room of the suite, far removed from every sight and sound that could disturb the lulling, dreamy languor of this veiled temple of beauty and repose. As you drew near, the light, and splendour, and glory of the scene became gradually obscured, darkened, and lost in the shadows stealing from the twilight, while your senses were overpowered by the delicious narcotic fragrance breathing from the flowers, and the low wailing of an Æolian harp, sighing from the stillness of this soft retreat. You enter through parting folds of heavy velvet drapery, stepping upon a soft carpet, in whose deep-yielding, downy texture your foot sinks—the shadows scarcely disturbed by the warm, subdued light stealing through the draperied windows, filling the room with a still, amber-coloured atmosphere—the silence and stillness of the air gently broken by the plaintive murmur of the invisible harp—the rich odour and sedative influence of the unseen shrubs and flowers—the absence of all that could disturb, and the presence of everything that could lull the faculties—the seductive languor of this scene, soothing the nerves, stealing on the brain, and weighing down the eyelids, overpower you, and you sink into a bathos of delicious repose.

Now, before we penetrate further into this retreat, let me present and contrast the portraits of three persons, who are constantly placed in juxtaposition. Please examine them carefully, for thereby hangs a moral. Ernest Dent was now sixty years of age—a large, tall, strong, heavy, rather corpulent man, with a square, bronzed face, and iron-grey head, and wiry and grizzled whiskers. His dress was sombre and respectable, his gait deliberate and dig-

nified, and his air senatorial and imposing—a disappointed, weary, anxious old man.

Juliette was thirty-seven. You would not have believed her to be more than twenty-five; but, you remember, I told you what care she took in the preservation and cultivation of her health and beauty. Possessed of a strong constitution, fine health, and a luxuriantly developed vital system, the rare beauty of the girl had ripened and matured into the perfect beauty of the woman. At thirty-seven she was another Cleopatra, for whom another Marc Antony might have lost the world. Her form was rounder, fuller, and more graceful; her complexion richer, darker, and brighter; her hair longer, softer, and more abundant; her eyes were larger, deeper, fiercer, softer—*her eyes!*—if you love your soul never encounter such. All that was most alluring and most fatal lived in those large, tender, brooding eyes—under their long black lashes—those fierce, splendid, blazing eyes—those orbs of demoniac beauty and power. There was another who dared their spell to his cost.

Il Signior Ippolyto di Nozzalina, a young officer in the Royal Guards, now in the suite of Augustus William, Grand Duke of ——, was on a visit to the court of ——. Let me see if I can give you some faint idea of the perfect beauty of this young Narcissus. A face and figure cast in the finest mould of classic elegance; a regal brow, shaded by raven ringlets, descending even to the proudly turned throat; an eagle eye, whose fiery and haughty glance never softened and sunk but in one presence; an august, yet gracious air, that awed while it attracted—such was the Signior Ippolyto di Nozzalina, the new-found cousin of Juliette, and the cicisbeo—the *cavalier servant de la belle ambassadrice.*

Return we now to the boudoir. Now that your eyes are used to the warm and glowing *chiar' oscura* of the scene you may see two figures. You observe Juliette. You see now that she is beautiful—far more beautiful than she ever was before. She reclines there in a costume of regal splendour—ay, and with an air of regal grandeur, too, tempered with the grace of tender languor. Her dress is

of crimson velvet, and rubies are glowing in her hair. She reclines there, her elbow resting on the end of the lounge; her dark and rounded arm encircled by blazing jewels, and, rising from its rich sleeve of velvet and lace, supports her glorious face, while veils of soft, black, shining curls sweep down on either side; her chin rests in the palm of her hand, while the tips of her jewelled fingers touch her glowing lips; and her splendid eyes—blazing, yet tender—are raised to the face of the person before her. She is bending slightly forward while she looks up, and the subdued golden light from the curtained windows throws over her a rich, glowing, amber-like transparency of colouring and complexion.

He was a young gentleman in the uniform of an officer of the German hussars. He was a man of stately presence; yet he stood before her now, chapeau in hand, eyes bent to the ground, in an attitude of deep respect, with the deferential air of a subject receiving the commands of his sovereign. She spoke,—

"Send the carriage away; I have no fancy for the festa to-day, Nozzalina."

The notes of the Æolian harp were not clearer, sweeter, softer, fuller, than her tones—no, nor *sadder*.

"Lady!"

"I have no fancy for the festa to-day, Ippolyto. Go and do as I tell you; and, as you return, bring Dante or Petrarch to read to me—or, no, not either of these—bring some contemplative poet, who sings in a soothing, lulling tone; and, Nozzalina, before you go, reach me hither that ottoman; place it under my feet. Now stop the wailing of that harp in the window; it makes me melancholy; it seems like the moaning and sighing of a lost soul."

This "servant out of livery" did all he was commanded, and noiselessly left the room.

As he left the room a shade gathered on the brow of the beauty; her lips quivered and compressed, a slight shudder passed over her frame, and her jewelled fingers clutched each other nervously. Pursuing the train of thought, she said,—

"No; not Dante or Petrarch; not stimulants to fever;

they are passionate, wild, and tumultuous, like my own stormy soul."

Rising, she paced restlessly up and down the room; then, returning, she sank upon her lounge, and, waving her hand once or twice across her brow, as if to mesmerise away the contraction of her features, she smiled as Nozzalina re-entered the boudoir. Seating himself near her, he opened his book, and commenced reading.

"Do you know, Ippolyto," at last she said, "that I love this language—this mellifluous Italian? It does not seem to me like a newly acquired, but like a recovered tongue; and so, indeed, it is; it was the language of my infancy."

Again the dark and jewelled hand was raised and passed once or twice before her brow, as though to charm away a shade or a pain that was falling there.

"My infancy—what an infancy, Ippolyto! Did I ever tell you from what a scene of terror my memory takes its first date, its utmost bound, behind which all is blank? Listen! The island of St. Domingo, near the sea-coast. Deep, dark night—storm, thunder, and lightning—and the dashing of the wild sea against the coast—and the roar of the cataracts, and the howling of the wind. A burning homestead, smoke, flames, falling roofs, glowing beams, and blazing rafters hurled through the air before the furious blast, and hundreds of dark demons leaping, capering, and exulting in frantic orgies through the scene—these were the sights. The reverberation of the thunder, the roaring of the sea, the noise of the cataracts, the howls and shrieks of the wind, the groans of the wounded and dying, the screams of women and children, and the triumphant shouts of the blacks—these were the sounds. Yes, Ippolyto! borne in a pair of strong, rugged arms, rested against a coarse, rough chest, through this scene of night and tempest, of flame and massacre, of shouts and groans, was I hurried, whirled. Yes, Ippolyto! that is the first thing I recollect in life. And the scene lives before me now, not as a retrospect, but as a vision—not as a memory, but as a prophecy."

Every vestige of colour faded from her cheeks as she

spoke, and her eyes gleamed wildly, and her voice was nearly lost as she muttered,—

"Ippolyto, do you believe in second sight?"

"No, sweet lady; but I believe in susceptible nerves and vivid imaginings. Do not recall such dreadful images, madam."

"'Recall!' I would to Heaven I could banish it. That scene of night, and storm, and fire, and carnage—lost to memory for thirty years—again and ever lives before me—fit *opening* for such a stormy life as mine—fit *close*. I believe in presentiments, Ippolyto!"

"You were rescued, lady?"

"Yes; but such was my advent into memory; that night of horror; then a long, tempestuous sea-voyage—the voyage of *life* to me, as I knew no other here, my cradle the deep cabin of a storm-rocked ship; my nurse a maniac mother, with dark brow, fierce eye, and streaming hair, whose very caresses were a terror. Such was my infancy; but girlhood—oh! cousin, my girlhood! that early, horrible initiation into all ——"

Then suddenly recollecting herself, she said,—

"Why do you gaze so? Is that the way in which you purpose to amuse me, signior? Resume your poem—or, no, give me music."

He took the harp, and, thinking to please her by his selection of a song in her own language and her mood, he swept his fingers over the strings, waking a wild and sad response, and commenced singing, slightly altering the words,—

"Thy soul is dark—oh! let me string
The harp that thou canst brook to hear,
And let my willing fingers fling
Its melting murmurs o'er thine ear;
I 'll bid the strain be wild and deep,
Nor let the notes of joy ——"

"Now, that is a magnificent idea, signior!" interrupted she, with a gay, haughty smile. "You would cure one upon the new homœopathic principle. Give me the harp."

She took it, and, playing a lively Maltese air, she sang,—

"How gaily sounds the castanet,
Beating time to bounding feet,
When, after daylight's golden set,
Maids and youths by moonlight meet."

She sang with chin erect and dancing eye, but no echo in her heart awoke to the music. At last, throwing down the harp, she said,—

"But what are you loitering here for, Ippolyto? Has not the hour for your attendance on the grand duke come and nearly passed?"

"It has, lady, if I have your leave to withdraw.'

"Go, cousin; but, oh! return soon. I cannot endure a *tête-à-tête* with my old ghoul, and I know he will bestow the comfort of his company on me the whole evening. He has fallen into a distressing *folie* for my poor society here lately."

She laughingly held out her hand, over which he bent deferentially, and then withdrew.

As he left the room she gazed after him. The smile vanished from her face; the shadow gathered, darkened, and deepened on her brow; and her beautiful lips writhed with scorn as she muttered,—

"What a sham, what a mockery, this humble service, this deferential air, as of a subject to his sovereign, to one who, if she were indeed a queen, would raise him to her throne, and do him homage! O that I were free! I *would* be free; I would myself strike the fetters from these wrists, but that I know thy high and gentle nature would shrink from touch of the crimsoned hand, Ippolyto. Thy *weak* nature, cousin; fearing God too much to be true to the devil; loving the devil too well to serve God. Fool! that will neither enjoy this world nor the next."

The frenzy of her vexation broke out in soliloquy as she arose and hurriedly paced the room, exclaiming passionately,—

"I *would* that he were dead. I *hate* him! this coarse, ugly, corpulent old man! this ox, this beast, this old rhinoceros of an Ernest Dent! this Quilp, this Caliban,

this grizzly old horror! this incubus, this picture of Time in the primer! this hateful, strong, old man, who will live—I *know* he will—a hundred years!"

A hand of iron fell heavily upon her shoulders, and turned her around. She turned deadly pale—General Dent stood before her.

Now, reader, I would gladly suppress this disgraceful scene if I might do so. It is humiliating, it distresses me, that Ernest Dent, even under the highest provocation, should shock our conception of his magnanimity, and disappoint our hopes. But this is human. I should like to have my hero perfect, or at least perfectly consistent; but then I should have to hunt for him out of this world. I should like to have a man who had been magnanimous *once*, be magnanimous *always;* but such are seldom found, we are such "creatures of circumstances;" and fifteen years of political toil and anxiety, and, worse than all, domestic trouble, had nearly ruined a temper once profoundly serene. Yes; and now the negotiation with which he had been charged had failed through his rigid adherence to principle. This very morning despatches had arrived from Washington recalling him in disgrace. His political and diplomatic reputation—that idol of his soul—was gone; he was "politically dead." His private fortune, too, was gone; had long since been squandered; squandered by the extravagance of this woman. The same mail that brought his recall brought a letter from his banker, telling him that not a farthing remained to his credit on his books. Yes; the same hour discovered to him that he was a beggared and a banned man; ruined in purse and in reputation; and in this hour of bitterness of heart, and weakness of mind, and exasperation of temper, he had sought Juliette—sought her, perchance, with a wish for her sympathy. That will help to account for his loss of temper in the scene that follows. Besides, you know it is so much easier to forgive the cruellest demonstration of love—*jealousy*—even when it rises to frenzy, and endangers your life—than to pardon cold blooded ingratitude, hatred, and scorn.

There they stood, facing each other; no longer the

impassioned lover and his beloved—*that* was passed years ago; no longer the indulgent husband and the spoiled wife—*that* was over also; but the exposed, unprincipled woman, and the wronged, stern old man.

What possessed Ernest Dent? He stood there like a Colossus of iron—that hard, strong, resolute, implacable old man—with a brow of rock and an eye of *fire* gazing upon Juliette. He had heard every word she had spoken, and they had transfixed him. The old man was almost sublime in his deep wrongs and his concentrated rage. His glances, as he contemplated her, began to leap like forked lightning from under the thunder-cloud that blackened his brow. Juliette quailed before him. She turned away her head and bowed it, until her beautiful ringlets fell around her like a veil, concealing her countenance from his eyes. He caught her wrists with his icy grasp, turned her around, and drew her toward him, looking steadily in her eyes with a lurid glare the while.

She had quailed but one instant, when, quickly recovering herself, she attempted to withdraw her hands from his grasp. He held them with the gripe of a vice, keeping his eyes fixed on her face. Too proud to struggle, she gracefully relaxed her effort, and seeing that she was detected beyond all possible doubt or duplicity to mend, and that nothing was left her but defiance, though her heart was shuddering and quailing in her bosom, she assumed her almost superhuman self-command, cleared her brow, and raised her eyes proudly and steadily to meet his seathing glance.

"So, Juliette!"

"Well, sir?"

"I have heard you!"

"I presume so."

"Audacious! It is not enough that I have doted on you until my very brains were fused in the fire of my love—it is not enough that for years I have borne with your ungovernable passions and disgraceful excesses, in the vain hope of reclaiming you—not enough that my property has melted away before your mad extravagance like snow before the sun—but now that your husband is

beggared in purse and ruined in reputation—do you know that I am a beggar, Juliette?"

"Very likely."

"Politically disgraced—recalled?"

"Still less surprising."

"And now that your husband is thus old, and beggared, and degraded, he cannot serve you farther, or oblige you more, than by dying, and getting himself out of your way."

"Well, sir, who taught me the lesson?" said she, in a tone of cold contempt. "Remember there was one, some sixteen years ago, who could not have obliged *you* more than by dying, and getting herself out of the way, as she *did*, but as *you* have not grace to do!" said she, raising her eyes, flashing with scorn, to his face.

"Viper!" exclaimed he, starting, stung to the quick by this home thrust. "This from *you*, Juliette?"

"Why, yes," said she, coolly; "but don't get excited, General Dent; it is unbecoming in your excellency. Consider," said she, delighted to turn and twist about the iron that was rusting in his festering heart, "she whom you desired and permitted to depart for the "Better Land" was but twenty years old; yet you thought, or seemed to think, that she had lived too long. *You* are sixty. Now, *I* never *did* pretend to philosophy and religion; therefore, why are you surprised that I *show* less than you?"

"Fiend!" muttered he, white with rage.

"Don't call ill names, it is unchristian, besides, consider it is but just, 'even-handed justice;' recollect 'the poisoned chalice returned to your own lips.' You perceive I have learned from you to quote and moralise, as well as to forecast and speculate," sneered she, with bitter sarcasm.

He glared on her. Natures like Ernest Dent's, naturally serene from their very profundity, are seldom moved; but when they are it is no babbling brook, but the deep sea in a tempest—terrible, unscrupulous, and unrestrained.

He dropped her hands, and, standing erect, folded his arms, saying, in a voice of concentrated rage,—

"To 'forecast and speculate' to little purpose, fair Juliette. Look at me! Does my appearance give promise of a speedy decay of vitality? Is my frame broken—bowed

—decrepit? Observe my face! Are the muscles loose, hanging, flaccid? Look in my eyes! Are they red, weak, and sunken?"

"Oh no, none of these. You are a 'marvellous proper man,' not so young, or so handsome as the Signior Ippolyto, but still very *passable* as old gentlemen go. Now, I really do not suppose you *will* go into a consumption to please me, as one did to please you; still there are such things as surfeits and apoplexies, and brain fevers; and if you go on in the way you are going on now, I really shall not be surprised at anything that happens. *You* taught me to anticipate, you know."

If she designed to deepen and concentrate his rage she succeeded *à merveille*.

He spoke in a voice of intense scorn and bitter irony, and his first words fell slowly and heavily from his lips, like bullets from the mould.

"You complained that I should live to be a hundred years old. I think it not unlikely that *I shall*; and such a life as I shall lead, oh! fairest Juliette; such a life of motion and sensation as I shall lead, oh! beautiful Juliette; for, look you, sweet, *sweet* Juliette! it was a joy to love and pamper you, but it will be a rapture to hate and punish you; for you are mine, *mine*, you know, and no power on earth can take you from me."

"Oh! *do* by all means become a tyrant, and since you cannot compel your wife to *love* you, make her *fear* you! if you can, remembering the while that we are in Christendom, and not in Barbary."

"Oh! *dear* Juliette, oh! *sweet* Juliette," said he, in a tone of the most sarcastic irony, "I shall take very good care to keep within the law; you have yet to learn what exquisite torture can be invented for you within the limits of the *civilised* law."

She lifted her proud, graceful head, and, raising her eyes to his face, she said,—

"General Dent, up to this time you have been simply contemptible; but if you talk in this style I shall consider that my personal safety requires that I leave your house."

"Shall you, my queen? Oh no, you shall *not*, my precious treasure. I shall guard you too well; or, if you manage to escape, I shall pursue you too quickly, recover you too soon. What! I could not *spare* you, fair Juliette. Where should I find such beauty again? Such large, dark, melting eyes; such long, soft, shining hair; such richness and brilliance of complexion? Oh! I have joyed in your beauty, Juliette, and I shall take *more* joy in your exquisite beauty, Juliette—*more* joy to *destroy it!* To see that fair, round, elastic contour of muscle collapse and darken under the pressure of privation and hardships! To see that lustrous eye grow dim, that brilliant cheek grow pale! To see that full red lip wilt down, that wealth of moist, shining hair grow dry, and thin, and grey, under the scathing influence of the life to which I destine you; for your dupe and victim is now your judge, Juliette."

Feeling too outraged and insulted to reply, Juliette, with a haughty air, prepared to leave the room.

He caught her hand as she passed him, and held it fast. She did not struggle to release it—she would never condescend to that; she paused and stood still, looking proud and calm, and contemplating him with quiet scorn. He surveyed her from head to foot—from the jewelled tiara to the embroidered slipper.

"By my soul, you are a splendid woman as you stand there, madam! A very queen of beauty and of love! It is a pity, is it not, now, that you cannot grace the court of —— for many years to come? What is the material of your dress? Crimson—*velvet*, I think you call it, though I am little versed in such matters. It becomes you rarely! And those gems that are glowing like fire in your black hair—rubies, are they not? A right royal costume, my queen! What a pity, now, that they should be changed for a cheap print and a plain comb, such as we can purchase in the country shops of Virginia. Have you the faintest recollection of ever having seen such low places, Madame l'Ambassadrice? What a pity! and yet such must be the dress of my wife, Juliette—the wife of the 'coarse old man,' who has not a hundred dollars in the world. That will be her dress."

—decrepit? Observe my face! Are the muscles loose, hanging, flaccid? Look in my eyes! Are they red, weak, and sunken?"

"Oh no, none of these. You are a 'marvellous proper man,' not so young, or so handsome as the Signior Ippolyto, but still very *passable* as old gentlemen go. Now, I really do not suppose you *will* go into a consumption to please me, as one did to please you; still there are such things as surfeits and apoplexies, and brain fevers; and if you go on in the way you are going on now, I really shall not be surprised at anything that happens. *You* taught me to anticipate, you know."

If she designed to deepen and concentrate his rage she succeeded *à merveille*.

He spoke in a voice of intense scorn and bitter irony, and his first words fell slowly and heavily from his lips, like bullets from the mould.

"You complained that I should live to be a hundred years old. I think it not unlikely that *I shall;* and such a life as I shall lead, oh! fairest Juliette; such a life of motion and sensation as I shall lead, oh! beautiful Juliette; for, look you, sweet, *sweet* Juliette! it was a joy to love and pamper you, but it will be a rapture to hate and punish you; for you are mine, *mine*, you know, and no power on earth can take you from me."

"Oh! *do* by all means become a tyrant, and since you cannot compel your wife to *love* you, make her *fear* you! if you can, remembering the while that we are in Christendom, and not in Barbary."

"Oh! *dear* Juliette, oh! *sweet* Juliette," said he, in a tone of the most sarcastic irony, "I shall take very good care to keep within the law; you have yet to learn what exquisite torture can be invented for you within the limits of the *civilised* law."

She lifted her proud, graceful head, and, raising her eyes to his face, she said,—

"General Dent, up to this time you have been simply contemptible; but if you talk in this style I shall consider that my personal safety requires that I leave your house."

terribly blended in human features. It was a countenance to haunt you in your dreams, and startle you in horror from your sleep—to turn you to stone, like the gaze of the fabled Gorgon. She herself caught the expression of her countenance in an opposite mirror, and muttering, "This will never do—*Il volto sciolto gli pensieri stutti!*" cleared her brow.

Taking up a small golden whistle, studded with jewels (Juliette affected oriental *bijouterie*), she blew a soft, clear call, which was answered by a small boy in the fantastical garb of a page

"Has the Signior Ippolyto returned?"

"Si, Signora."

"Let him know that I will receive him here."

With a low bow the boy withdrew from the room.

The Signior di Nozzalina re-entered the boudoir soon after.

As he came in she sank into a deep lounging chair that stood with its back to the wall, and motioned him to take the seat in front of her; so that, while she might scrutinise the workings of his mind in his features, her own face remained in deep shadow, and the expression of her countenance was concealed. He took the seat that she indicated.

She was still as a statue, or as the surface of a volcano. At last she commenced speaking, and in tones and words that deepened in intensity and fervour as she went on, suppressing all that was exasperating in her own deportment, and exaggerating everything that was violent and insulting in her husband's conduct, she told the story of her pretended wrongs—watching his countenance the while, which answered to her words like the chords of a fine-toned lyre to the touch of a skilful musician—observing how its indignation arose as her story progressed, until, at its climax, he sprang to his feet and clapped his hand upon his rapier with a ring that awoke the echoes. How much of this was real, and how much acting, she was soon to know. With a graceful wave of the hand she brought him to his seat again.

"And 'to these vile uses' does he deem that I shall come, Ippolyto!"

Then hastily she inquired,—

Wishing to escape from him, and that, too, without compromising her dignity, she said, with infinite tact,—

"Such a dress as Juliette Summers wore when Ernest Dent first knew and loved her."

His lip curled. "It will not do, Juliette."

But though he said, "It will not do," it *did* do, as she knew it would. This tender image suddenly called up amid this stormy scene, like a soft, sweet note of music stealing on the ear "amid the magnificent crash of harmony,"—this memory of his first, his *only* passionate love—dearly as he had paid for it—affected him somewhat. His rage was subsiding. Looking at her with a softening countenance, he said,—

"Why, Juliette, if you were a degree less unprincipled and detestable I could find it in my heart to pity you—when I look at you in your peerless beauty and regal splendour, in this scene of soft voluptuousness, and think what a tremendous contrast to this your future lot will be. It has been my pride and pleasure to see you surrounded with the luxury of an Eastern sultana, and state and attendance of a European princess; and had you been true and loving, these hands and this brain should have worn themselves out, rather than you should have suffered one privation. Where now will be your troop of servants? This little hand of yours, Juliette,"—and he crushed the jewelled hand in his broad palm as he spoke—"this little hand of yours is wondrous soft and delicate—unfit for work; yet it must toil. I would have saved it, but this is over. I have neither motive nor energy left for struggle!" and he tossed the soft hand from him, and, rising abruptly, left the room.

She possessed almost miraculous powers of self-command. Her self-possession had not once been suffered to desert her during this exasperating scene. Now that he had gone she stood rooted where he had left her; a fearful change came over her countenance; her features hardened into an expression of dark, stern, cruel, and deadly determination. It was a thing to shrink from in horror—that sharply cut, black and white, savagely beautiful face. Never were demoniac malignity and perfect beauty so

lips—short, curt, strong, and mad, as gasps from the tortured; and her teeth gnashed between every word, with the quick, strong, fierce snap of the tiger's jaws.

"Death!—death!—death!—death!"

Gusts of passion swept over, shaking her; she wrung and twisted her dark and jewelled fingers, until the gems had torn the flesh.

"This man! this man! who six weeks since would have thrown himself into the burning crater of Vesuvius for my love, had I bid him! *Now!* may the fiend catch my *soul*, but I'll destroy him! Yes, and that *other!* Yes, *both!* Yes, *both!* One to *death*, and one to shame *worse* than death, will I bring! *I*—I have it! The grand duke! These eyes have not lost their spell—this spirit its power—to *catch!* for, oh, Satan! mocking fiend! thou never gavest them the power to *keep!*"

She struggled with her passion; a few more shudders shook her frame; a few more surges of feeling swept over her, and she mastered her emotion, arose above herself, and assumed her sovereign self-command.

Then her mellow whistle summoned her page again. He entered.

"Have lights brought in, Belto; and tell Ninnetta and Bianca to attend me here."

The boy bowed to the ground, and withdrew.

"Yes," thought she, "there is no time to be lost. I must go to this royal festival to-night, at least."

She was silent a few minutes, and then her splendid imagination, lighting up her dark purpose as a conflagration at midnight lights up the darkest landscape, broke out in this invocation to the arch fiend:—

"Now, Satan, dark, resplendent spirit, more glorious in thy 'obscured glory,' more attractive in thy robe of night and flame, and thy crown of fire, and mightier in thy scorn and pride than the seraphim clothed in light and love! Now, Satan, to whom I have given no shrinking, shuddering, divided service, but the whole allegiance of my burning soul! a soul, I feel it, struck as a spark of living fire from thine own fierce spirit! Now, Satan, prince of the power of the air, who will reward thy fearless,

"When does the grand duke go, Ippolyto?"

"In ten days, signora," said he, sadly.

"And you accompany him, of course?"

"With the deepest regret, *bellissima Giullietta.*"

He said this in a tone of the deepest dejection, while his eye seemed floating in tenderness.

She gave him both her hands, leaning them heavily upon his palms; she looked, she gazed into his eyes as though she would wile the soul from his bosom; and then she spoke, or rather, notes of softest, clearest music floated from her lips, forming themselves into these words, and falling naturally into the most melodious language, to express the most passionate sentiment,—

"Noi ci amiamo iussieme, Ippolyto? Che più sperar si può? Lasciami venir con te!"

And she leaned forward and dropped her head upon his bosom. Gently releasing himself, he replied, smilingly,—

"Tu ti dainlle furie mia cara! Il generale il mio amico. Je voglio vivere con te e voglio amarti tutto il tempo che noi resteremo sotto questo tetto, ma non giammai fuggerò con te. Mentre non voglio trattare cosi ingratamente il generale tuo marito."

She averted and upraised her face. Well had it been for his safety could he have seen the expression of intense anguish and hellish malignity that tortured that horribly beautiful countenance! He only saw, as she raised and turned away her head, her tiara of rubies flash and gleam like Satan's diadem of fire. She was still and silent for a few minutes, and then, in a quiet, ay, even humble tone, she said,—

"Leave me, Ippolyto, and return three hours hence, to attend me to the palace."

He dropped upon his knee, with a devotion and reverence deeper than he had ever shown before; he raised her hand to his lips, arose, and was gone.

She now sprang upon her feet with the strong elastic bound of a wild beast, shaking with fury from head to foot. She essayed to speak—she was choking—she must speak or die. At last, words that seemed in their passage to have torn and riven her dark bosom, burst from her

magnificent saloon leaning on the arm of the Signior Ippolyto di Nozzalina. He wore the full-dress uniform of a colonel in the German hussars. She was arrayed in a splendid white satin gorgeously wrought with gold. Her long black ringlets fell glittering like jet below her waist; a wreath of diamond rose-buds with emerald leaves flashed above her brow. The room was filled with the high and mighty, the brave and the beautiful. It was a scene of royal state, of splendid display, and of voluptuous indulgence. He led her through the whole length of the room to a seat at the upper end—a chair of polished and gilded ebony, raised on a platform covered with a crimson cloth, and canopied with crimson satin fringed with gold. Reader, this was not a throne, though Juliette assumed it with imperial hauteur. Many such seats as this were arranged about the walls and recesses of the vast saloon. He led her to this regal seat with an air of graceful and stately deference. Her glorious form was thrown out into beautiful relief by the crimson chair and canopy. From the ceiling, above this gorgeous chair, hung a large chandelier, with a thousand pendent crystals, flashing as they turned a flood of rainbow-tinted light upon the brilliant beauty in the rich chair below. He had taken his stand beside, and a little behind her; while she, with her own superb air of haughty indifference, overlooked the scene below. Her proud eye passed coldly, unconsciously, over the heads of many a fair and noble lady, many a brave and high-born cavalier, to settle with more interest upon a group at the opposite end of the saloon. This group was composed of the Grand Duke Augustus William, his fair young bride, the Grand Duchess Bianca, with the lords and ladies of their suite. Upon the grand duke she looked with the cold scrutinising glance of a depraved woman upon her doomed but abhorred victim. He wore the rich and tasteful uniform of a general of the German hussars; yet even this superb dress, the most martial and imposing, the *chef-d'œuvre* of military costume, failed to confer dignity upon one naturally insignificant in form and mean in expression. A shade of loathing stole over the face, and a slight shudder agitated the form, of the voluptuous

unshrinking worshipper with the kingdoms of the earth and the glory thereof! abjuring all other faith and fealty to Heaven or Earth—I turn to thee—I worship thee—I invoke thee—I hold thee to thy word. Come to me!—come to me!—in dreams of luscious vengeance. Come to me! Come to me in visions of power and dominion. Come to me, and clothe me with thine own might and charm. Give me to win and *retain* love, but never, *never* again let me love. Give me to inspire and perpetuate passion, but never, *never* again to feel it."

As highly excited violent emotion is frenzy, so deep concentrated passion is strong, brooding, chained insanity. The first is the thunder and lightning above the surface of the earth; the last is the intense, glowing, confined fires at the centre. The outbreak of the first is felt in the purifying storm; the outbreak of the last in the devastating earthquake.

In three hours from this Juliette was moving through the saloon of the royal palace of ——, the cynosure of all eyes.

The fête was one of a series of splendid entertainments given to celebrate the nuptials of the Grand Duke Augustus William and the Princess Bianca of Este. All the state apartments and the festal saloons of the palace had been gorgeously decorated, brilliantly lighted, and thrown open for the reception of the princely and noble guests. The beautiful grounds around the palace, shaded by green groves, cooled by fresh fountains, varied by open glades, by parterres of flowers, and by ponds of pure water; ornamented by vine-wreathed arbours, by rare statues, and rich vases, were also illuminated by lamps pendent among the foliage of the trees, shining through brilliant and variegated crystal shades, that threw flashes of many-coloured light upon statue, grove, and fountain, that reflected back the splendour, and, fed by perfumed oil, that shed a rich, delicious odour through the air of night. Drawn up before the vast illuminated front of the palace, whence issued streams of light and bursts of music, were some hundred carriages. The equipage of the American ambassadress was the last to arrive. Juliette entered the

drooping eyelashes piqued his curiosity—he longed to see the soul beneath them. He watched to see them raised; he gazed with interest, with intensity. Those eyelashes were not lifted, did not move, did not even quiver. Yet as he gazed he unconsciously became the subject of a potent influence emanating from them—steady, powerful, piercing to his inmost soul, attracting him irresistibly as destiny. He moved to his fate. A half-defined feeling, as if inanity, apathy, death, were behind and around him, and excitement, exhilaration, life, before him, drawing him forward, lured him on. This was emotion only. Thought was composed. He moved, scarcely knowing at first whither, or to what end he moved.

His brother-in-law, Prince Lorenzo d'Este, with the gentlemen of his suite, moved forward to attend him, but turning, he said, "Lorenzo of Este, permit us for five minutes to shake off the chains of court etiquette, and walk about in a scene like this a free man. We go to have a chat with our youthful aid, Ippolyto of Nozzalina, and with his fair cousin, Madame l'Ambassadrice Américaine;" and half petulantly shaking off his suite, he sauntered forward alone. The grand duke had seen Juliette once or twice before, had wondered at her superhuman beauty, but never felt the power of her fascination until now, and even now he was unconscious of the potent spell closing fatally around him. As he approached her she remained still—appeared unconscious—but the pendent crystals of the chandelier above her head, in turning, threw down a flood of rosy light that was flashed back by her gorgeous dress, until it resembled the rippling, glittering, variegated colours of a brilliant serpent in its attitude of fascination. He was by her side. She raised her eyelids suddenly, and flashed the light of her fatal eyes into his soul. The doom of Augustus William, Grand Duke of ——, was sealed. He remained near her all the evening; he sought her next morning—he sought her every day. It seemed exhilaration, life, to approach her—apathy, death, to recede from her. But why go on?

It would be a useless and revolting repetition of her former wiles to describe how this incarnate Beauty of

beauty as she contemplated him. Her eyes next fell upon the form of the young grand duchess. She gazed upon her with the interest with which an arrogant and determined woman gazes upon a possible obstacle to her plans. But as she contemplated the delicate figure, the pale face, and cold manner of the young bride, a slight smile, half of scorn, half of triumph, writhed her beautiful lips, and she gracefully elevated her own luxuriously rounded form to its proudest altitude, then, drooping languidly, gave herself up to the web of fascination she was weaving. She reclined forward in her seat, a little on one side, her elbow resting on the arm of the chair, her chin supported in the palm of her hand, her long black eyelashes drooped upon her cheek, her long black ringlets sweeping to her lap, her attitude half soft languor, half haughty disdain. A careless looker on would have pronounced her a proud, indolent beauty, half asleep. Yet those veiled eyes never lifted their covert gaze off of one object—the Grand Duke Augustus William. There *appeared* nothing in that look a Puritan might cavil at. It seemed a dreamy, half-unconscious gaze, tender as love, gentle as charity, earnest as worship, yet steady as destiny, implacable as death, fatal as damnation. Superficial observers would have supposed her fine eyes merely veiled in languor. None but the victim felt the power of this covert gaze. Let us look at the syren through the eyes of the Grand Duke Augustus William. Heartily weary of the cold reserve of his bride, who had married his crown and not himself, weary of the flat inanities of the circle around them, bored with being obliged to act the gracious to the one and the gallant to the other, his eyes roved warily around the room for something to rest upon—they were caught, fixed, riveted by one object—a gorgeous picture of a superbly beautiful woman, her glorious form arrayed in gold-wrought white satin, and thrown into full relief by the crimson background of the chair and canopy, and lighted up into splendour by the variegated showers of light falling from the chandelier above, first attracted his glance. Then the rich, dark, bright, glorious countenance fascinated his gaze; then the still, long, black,

a dalliance with sinful thoughts—how the entertaining of sinful thoughts generated wrong desires, which grew to evil passions—how the indulgence of these evil passions became an inveterate habit—and how, *with all this*, it had cost this sinner as much of struggle, resistance, and perseverance to become the demon she was, as ever it cost a Christian to become a saint. Life *is* and *must be* a struggle. The wrong-doer is as great a wrestler as the right-doer, with this difference—that the saint struggles against his *worse* nature, and the sinner against his *better* nature. "The power of sinning is not a solitary, unqualified, diabolical power of evil—a dark and cold abstraction of wickedness. No, it is clothed with other qualities. No, it has dread attendants—attendants, I had almost said, that dignify even the wrong. A waiting conscience, visitings—oh! visitings of better thoughts, calls of honour and self-respect come to the sinner, terrific admonition whispering in his secret ear; prophetic warning pointing him to the dim and veiled shadows of a future retribution, and the all-penetrating, all-surrounding idea of an avenging God are present with him; and the right arm of the felon and the transgressor is lifted up amidst lightnings of conviction and thunderings of reproach."*

But it is not upon the fell Juliette that I wish to dwell. *Her* after crimes and their punishment were on too awfully grand a scale for my feeble pen to attempt to portray. I wish to return and follow the fortunes of her *first* victim, Ernest Dent.

* Dr. Orville Dewey.

Evil set her fatal eyes upon a magnate in the land—an eagle in the sky—and, luring him from his high flight, brought him fluttering and powerless to her feet. A burning desire of revenge upon Nozzalina, whose head, by her diabolical machinations was brought to the block within a year, for an alleged conspiracy—an intense hatred of her husband—a fear of privation—a constitutional love, and the habitual necessity of luxury—an aspiring ambition, that sought to rule through any means and at any price—these mixed motives—and not an atom of *penchant* for the royal simpleton, her lover—had driven her to this disgraceful step. In ten days from the evening of the royal festival the beautiful *ambassadrice* had vanished from the court of ——, leaving no trace of her flight, a lost Pleiad from Italia's sky.

In twelve days from the same date the Grand Duke of —— and suite had left the city. She assumed her family name—a name that she had never before been known by—so that there were few, very few, who recognised the beautiful and dangerous Juliette Summers in the powerful and infamous Baroness N——, the mistress of the Grand Duke of ——; that fell woman whose stupendous crime and awful doom thrilled with horror the whole heart of the Germanic Confederation—whose very skull, taken down from a pole above the city gate, is now, in these phrenological days, exhibited as the *chef-d'œuvre* of demoniac subtlety and malignity. The soul sickens and the heart shudders at this revolting allusion. The story is well known. Do not ask me to give you its loathsome and horrible details. With the termination of her connection with the family of Ernest Dent closes, or should close, our interest in this daughter of Satan, who condensed in her short life of forty years more crime than ever blackened the soul of a Borgia—whose very name gave to the German language a new word expressive of superlative wickedness—whose very fate gave to the German language a new word expressive of superlative wretchedness. I had intended to have reviewed and analysed this woman's character and life—to have traced from its germ the development of evil in her soul—to have shown how she began by

and his wife; nay, more—to a weak and unworthy foe. It was like the magnanimity that armed the ancient knight against the powerful and strong, and sheathed his sword in the presence of the weak or the ignoble. All the rest he could have borne better than this self-loathing of a fine, generous nature, that had suffered itself to be provoked into a little meanness. But a darker stain of shame, a deeper, a spirit-crushing humiliation was in store for him —Juliette's elopement. For the ten days succeeding the scene in the boudoir he had scarcely seen her, being taken up in preparations for their departure to America, and feeling also a natural and strong aversion to her society, not from the thought of her bad conduct, but from the memory of his own violence. Now, when the fact of her elopement was made known to him, when he knew, beyond a doubt, that dishonour had fallen upon him as a garment —no, I cannot attempt to portray how this proud son of proud Virginia, this haughty descendant of one of England's haughtiest aristocrats, withered and fell under this blow *for a time*. He did not pursue or attempt to recover her. Oh, no! he could not do that. He could have *no* dealings, not even legal dealings with her now He could not, he would not, for the world, for redress, for vengeance, have looked upon her face again, even in a court of justice. Leaving the disposal of his splendid furniture, his library, his statues, pictures, articles of *vertu*, &c., in the hands of an agent, he threw himself on board the first home-bound vessel, and sailed for Norfolk. Let us take a look at him as he sits there, in the deep, dark cabin, doubled up, his elbows resting on his knees, his face hid in the broad palms of his hands. We saw him on board of a ship once before, when he stood, in the glorious pride and prime of manhood, erect, with happy and haughty self-consciousness, sustaining on his strong arm the graceful figure of his young and beautiful bride; and we see him now. "Look on this picture, and on that." Fifteen years have passed, and he is old, poor, dishonoured, and forsaken. He was sixty years old. "The heat and burden of the day" of life were past. What had he done? The warp of his years was nearly filled in. What was the woof, his works?

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

"Go, when the hunter's hand hath wrung
From forest cave her shrieking young,
And calm the lonely lioness,
But soothe not, mock not my distress."—BYRON.

"From mighty wrongs to petty perfidy
Have I not seen what human things could do,
From the loud roar of foaming calumny
To the small whisper of the aspersing few,
And subtle venom of the reptile crew?"—BYRON.

"A lone, stern man. Yet as sometimes
The tempest-smitten tree receives
From one small root the sap which climbs
Its topmost spray and crowning leaves,
So from his child the Sachem drew
A life of Love and Hope, and felt
His cold and rugged nature through
The softness and the warmth of her young being melt."
WHITTIER.

WHEN General Dent left the boudoir of his wife he had hurried along at random through long galleries, and interminable corridors, and many suites of apartments, until he chanced to come upon a dark, silent room, in a remote part of the palazzo. Here he threw himself into a chair, and groans—such groans as are only sent forth from a great grief in a great heart—broke like burning lava from the crater of his bosom. Nor was it over his squandered fortune, his ruined political hopes, or his treacherous Juliette, that he grieved most. No; all this he was strong enough to bear. But the humiliation of his bitter self-contempt bowed him to the dust. With all his natural sternness of character, and notwithstanding his grievous moral dereliction, Ernest Dent possessed a sensitive and high-toned sentiment of honour—a magnanimity of character that now, asserting its claims, arose and shamed and reproached him for his violence of manner to a woman,

houses, the snug cabins, the well-tended fields, the orchards, the vineyards, and the apiary—the excellent kitchen garden—the lovely flower garden, with its rose bushes and arbours, and you remember the cheerful, willing labourers, whose pride it was to keep all this in the neatest possible order—who were as proud of their model farm as our patriots are of their model republic?

In a word, you remember the farm in 18—; now look at the farm in 182–. No sadder change had passed over Ernest Dent himself than had passed over his model farm. The house, for want of a little paint, has grown dingy; for the want of a nail driven, a shingle put on, or a pane of glass put in, it is leaking in all the rooms; the paper is mildewed, and hanging from the walls; the windows are broken, and pasted up with paper; some of the doors hang by only one hinge; and dust, and must, and rust have accumulated all over the house. Green, dank grass has grown up, and overgrown the stone steps and the outside doors of the cellar. The house is the very picture of desertion and desolation.

Now for the farm. The fences and outhouses are in a miserably dilapidated condition; the fields have been wretchedly tended, and the crop is naught; the trees in the orchard are some of them, for the want of props, broken down with fruit, some of them covered with cobwebs and caterpillars, and some infested with worms; the grape vines in the vineyards, broken down by the storms of years, have been left untrained and unbound, trailing on the ground—dead—the caterpillars have woven over them a shroud of gossamer; the garden has grown up in weeds, and the cattle have trampled down the flowers; the apiary is a ruin. What had wrought this change? When the soul departs the body falls into dissolution. The soul of liberty and hope had departed from the model farm, and it was sharing the same fate.

As the carriage descended the road that wound down the hill toward the house he observed much of this, though it was nearly dusk, and the candle-light already gleaming through the front windows of the house. It was quite dark when the carriage drew up before the door, and he

The spring and summer of existence were gone—the seedtime had passed—autumn had come—the harvest was ripe for the sickle. What should he reap?—nay—sixty? Autumn is gone—winter, the winter of old age, is at hand. The harvest of life is reaped and gathered into barns. With what are they filled? What stores of knowledge and experience, of wisdom and virtue, has he collected? What temptations has he overcome; what Christian progress made; what spiritual growth attained? *None*, alas! and sixty years old! He looked back on the waste of more than half a century—on the first forty years of life spent with his father in toil of body and mind, but in peace of conscience and tranquillity of spirit; two years passed with Hester, his sweet, gentle wife; two blessed years, that, as he now recalled them, seemed a dream of heaven; and then the long and weary years of his second marriage; and, lastly, upon the scenes of the last few days, remembered like the phantasmagoria of a hideous dream! He had ample time for reflection and retrospection during that long sea voyage. He was inert, apathetic, unwilling to make the slightest exertion. The elasticity of his organisation was gone—the spring of his energies broken. And in this deplorable state of mind he arrived at Norfolk, took the steamboat for Washington, delivered up his commission, and set out by stage for his home in the Valley of Virginia. All this he did, half unconsciously, like a man in a dream.

It was late in an autumn day that General Dent, after an absence of five years, approached the neighbourhood of his home. Having previously written to Marcus Derby that he should be at home on a certain day, he found his old family carriage, with George, his old coachman, waiting for him at the village where the stage stopped. He entered it, and was driven toward the Vale. Now, while he is on the road, I will give you some idea of the home to which he is going. You remember the clean, cool, quiet, fragrant, well-kept home over which sweet Hester Grey presided? That pleasant house in the Green Vale—the homestead of the model farm? You remember the model farm, with its neat, white-painted fences and out-

mained until she was seventeen years old; when, a year before the return of General Dent, Marcus Derby had brought her home for the recruiting of her delicate health. By the way, in the absence of General Dent, Marcus Derby had been left her guardian, to pay her school bills, furnish her books and pocket money, and bring her home every year to spend the August holidays.

With the earliest dawn of this sweet child's intellect had developed a fervent, devoted piety; a soul, an ardent soul, that with intensity of aspiration sought reunion with its divine origin. *She* never complained, as her more earthly mother had done, of the want of love. Her whole life was love; her full soul was love; in love she "lived, and moved, and had her being"—in the supreme love of the Infinite. Often, in the devoted aspirations of her fervent soul, she had thought, "Would that God would give me something to be, or do, or suffer for his sake." Such was the enthusiasm of the young saint. Her life was not cold and void—it was as full and as glowing as faith, and hope, and love—as God could make it.

In person Julie was a slight, delicate girl, with the thinnest, fairest face you ever saw, with large, clear, dark grey, hollow eyes. Her high white forehead was slightly shaded with fine, thin, silky, little, black ringlets, so light and black that soft shifting shades were constantly playing on the blue-veined temples, heightening the effect of the most spiritual face you ever beheld.

"Now I 'll tell you what it is, General Dent. You have only found your treasure to lose her again very soon," said Marcus; "the young bird must leave its nest, you know. I couldn't help it; I haven't been able to keep the fellow away. Henry, where are you, Henry? Come and show your handsome face."

And a young gentleman, in the undress uniform of a naval officer, advanced from a distant part of the room.

"Lieutenant Henry Bland, United States navy; the youngest son of your old friend, Judge Bland," said Mr. Derby, presenting him.

The young man gave his hand to General Dent with an air of self-appreciation that the latter did not at all approve,

alighted, and was caught boisterously in the arms of Marcus Derby, who shouted,—

"Welcome! Welcome home, General Dent! Goodness! Is this you? Turn around, old fellow, and let 's look at you. Grown corpulent; well, so have *I*—rather. We have had a green turtle ordered up from Norfolk. Come in out of the night air, and kiss Fanny. She 's got six boys and five girls. We all took the liberty of coming over here to welcome you home; and we have brought some one with us, too, that you will be glad to see."

Marcus Derby, whose heels-over-head good-heartedness was changed by time into the rough *bonhommie* of a country gentleman, ushered General Dent into the old parlour. The mildewed old room was made as comfortable as circumstances would admit by a glowing wood fire and a well-spread tea-table. Fanny Derby, now a fair, placid matron, in a pretty cap, stood near the table to receive him, and offered her cheek to his proffered salute with the blushing ingenuousness of girlhood. Then stepping back, she took by the hand a fair, slight, graceful girl, in a white muslin dress, and led her up to him, saying,—

"Your daughter, General Dent."

"Yes; we brought her home, a year ago, from school. Her health was suffering, as I wrote you. She has been staying with us, and this evening we brought her over to welcome her father home," said Marcus, coming up.

Ernest Dent drew his fair child toward him, and imprinted a kiss upon her white brow. He wished to fold her to his bosom, but not then or there. He seated her with the courtesy of a gentleman, rather than with the love of a father.

Julie, vision of purity, how shall I describe thee—Hester's gentle child?

> "Some angel guide my pencil while I draw
> What nothing less than angel can portray—
> A maid on earth devoted to the sky."

Her infancy and childhood had passed not unlike that of her mother. She had been placed, at the age of eight years, in a northern boarding-school, where she had re-

"Thank God, that he has at last given me something to bear for his sake."

"And the loss of caste, my little aristocrat—the abandonment of you by your peers in society; for the wise and good will neglect you in thoughtlessness, as the wicked and foolish will from pride and scorn, and you will be left alone. Can you bear this, too?"

"Jesus was despised and rejected of men. The servant is not greater than her Master."

Her face was kindling with inspiration.

He gazed upon the rapt countenance of the young saint a moment, and then he took her slender hand, and said, gravely,—

"And if, upon this account, Henry Bland abandons you, my Julie?"

The light faded from her face, her voice was sinking, as she murmured,—

"He will never do that, my father."

"My child, he will—he has."

She turned pale, and sank back in her chair, as she whispered, in nearly inaudible tones,—

"Father, is this so—do you vouch for this?"

"Julie, I had a conversation with Judge Bland yesterday, in which I felt it my duty to tell him of our purpose of freeing these negroes, and the great change it would make in your fortune. He left me with a very thoughtful brow, and this morning, Julie, I received this letter from Henry Bland. Listen, and *despise* him, as I do.

He opened the letter, and read,—

"FROSTVILLE, December 26, 182–.

"GENERAL DENT,—After mature deliberation upon the subject-matter of the conversation that passed between my father, Judge Bland, and yourself, in your library yesterday morning, I feel constrained, under the circumstances, to resign all pretensions and claim to the honour of Miss Dent's hand, and to the distinction of General Dent's connection.

"With high respect for Miss Dent and yourself, I remain your servant,

"HENRY BLAND."

so that he turned and looked in Julie's face with some anxiety, but Julie's "moonlight" countenance was "undisturbed and sweet."

"Oh! he 'll do. He 'll pass muster," said Marcus, laughing, clapping him on the back, and they sat down to tea.

Let me hurry over a few weeks of time. Julie had inherited the Green Vale estate in right of her mother. As in her case there had been no will, so there was no vexatious and procrastinating clause; consequently, on her eighteenth birthday, Julie came into the full possession of her personal property. It was upon this day that Julie was seated with her father in his study—a close, damp, mildewed closet enough now. His countenance was very grave and sad, and his voice very tender, as he conversed with her. They were speaking of that long-deferred, much-vexed question, the emancipation of the coloured people on the farm—a step that Julie, from her earliest childhood, had determined to take as soon as she came into the possession of her property. He was setting before her, in its strongest colours, the amount of the sacrifice she was about to make, not with a purpose of deterring her, but from a sense of duty, that she might make this sacrifice with a full knowledge of its cost—a cost far dearer than she dreamed of. He depicted the advantages of wealth, station, attendance, refined society, leisure for the elegant pursuits of literature, the arts, and travel; and, in short, every good thing that gold can buy for the favoured daughter of fortune. With this he contrasted the trials that beset the rough road of a sensitive and delicate girl, compelled to seek her own living. The hard toil, the scanty remuneration, the insulting assumption, or the still more insulting condescension of many of the would-be fine ladies and gentlemen—the vulgar genteel portion of the class it would be her lot to serve.

"Can you, my delicate Julie—can you endure this hard, soul-crushing poverty?"

"The Son of man had not where to lay his adorable head, my father," she answered, with holy gentleness.

There is an elegant villa of white freestone on the banks of a western river. It is the residence of General Dent, late governor of the state of ——. He is ninety years old, and is still in the enjoyment of a green old age. I think he bids fair to make out more than his century. His falcon eye and steady aim can still bring down the wild turkey on the wing. He has the best library and the rarest collection of *certu* in the west. Julie is over forty years of age. She has been married several years, and her eldest daughter, Hester Grey, is fifteen. Her husband has represented his state in Congress for several years past. They all reside with General Dent.

Indulgent reader, I promised, at the commencement of this tale of real life, to illustrate a retribution that should grow out of the sin as naturally as the fruit is produced from the germ—a retribution that should be the sin itself in its final stage of development. And this particular form of retribution I chose to depict, because, though always certain, always inevitable, it is seldom thought of. Divine retribution belongs to Eternity, and is distant and vague. Human retribution is uncertain, depending upon discovery and other fortuitous circumstances; but Moral retribution is as sure as life, as sure as death, as sure as the sin out of whose bosom it springs, as natural as the pain that follows the contact of fire. I have tried to show you how from the sin, domestic infidelity and treachery, sprung inevitably the punishment, domestic distrust and wretchedness. Human and legal retribution we may elude by concealment; divine retribution we may avert by a timely repentance; but moral retribution we must suffer, and that, not by the arbitrary sentence of a despot, but by the natural action of an equitable law, old as eternity, immutable as God.

THE END.

He finished reading, and closed the letter.

"Well, Julie, can you bear this, too?"

She folded her hands meekly on her bosom, and murmured,—

"Jesus was crucified. 'Even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight;'" and then her hands fell upon her lap. Her father gazed on her with a growing love. At last, in a glow of enthusiasm, he opened his arms to her, saying,—

"Come to my bosom, my noble Julie! For Henry, you are well rid of him. I thank God that you have made a great escape. For the rest, you shall bear none of these things. I have a motive and strength for exertion now, my Hester's gentle child!"

And he had, and his child had imparted it. The old man roused himself up in his strength, like an old lion from his lair, full of vigour, and energy, and enterprise; and happier, far happier, than he had been for fifteen long years.

How admirable is strong old age! is that unfailing, undying mental and moral energy, that seems to bid defiance to time or age to weaken or impair! such as we see in some of our own glorious old men, strong pillars of the commonwealth, the patriarchs of National Legislation, who come here to Washington every winter Honour and a full century to them!

Julie carried out her purpose of emancipation. Every man, woman, and child, to the number of three hundred, were freed. And then the land was sold. But the impoverished land brought but a low price. With this money they went to the west, where General Dent's distinguished political talents raised him to a high place in the state government. He had been established out there two years when he heard of the terrible doom of Juliette. The sickening horror of this news threw him into a brain fever, which brought him to the very brink of the grave. He recovered, but even now there are some names and places which, if casually mentioned in his presence, turn him sick to faintness. Julie never guessed her crime or fate. He would never have darkened her fair soul with such an image of horror.

* * * * * *

who in 1747 owned nearly a quarter of the whole State of Maryland, in 1848 did not possess a foot of land in any country; and that the children of James Howlet, a domestic of the Brotherton family, have risen to the highest places in the army, the navy, and the senate. But then the former sunk through idleness, sensuality, and extravagance; the latter rose by energy, industry, and sobriety.

Brotherton Hall had been some years in Chancery at the time our story commences. The sole representatives of the Brotherton family were now Mrs. Judith Brotherton and her grand-daughter Sybil. That dear old lady was a character! Heaven bless her! I fear I shall caricature the portrait in trying to portray her excellent, but somewhat complex nature; just as, when I was a little girl, and would have some beautiful ideal face haunting my imagination, and, taking a pencil to draw it, would produce some hideous monstrosity, and throw away pencil and sketch in disgust.

Mrs. Brotherton had been very handsome in her youth, and was still a fine-looking old lady. She had a tall, stately figure, with singularly small feet and hands. Her high forehead and small Roman nose were relieved from hauteur by the tender expression of her deep blue eyes, and the beautiful contour of her mouth. Now don't sneer, young ladies and gentlemen; I have seen both old men and old women with very beautiful and attractive faces, albeit somewhat grey and wrinkled; and, when I was a school-girl, I was very near falling in love with an old gentleman of sixty for his beautiful smile and musical voice, and the fervent soul breathing through both.

But to my story. Mrs. Brotherton, to complete her portrait, generally wore a black satin dress, with a fine white muslin handkerchief folded over her bosom, and a plain cap of lace on her head. Mrs. Brotherton's character was very remarkable for three qualities—high family pride, warm benevolence of heart, and great romance of mind. Her benevolence always kept her pride in check, so that it never became arrogant, but was only

A WIFE'S TEMPTATIONS.

'Thou dwell'st on sorrow's high and barren place,
But round about the mount an angel-guard,
Chariots of fire, horses of fire, encamp
To keep thee safe for heaven."—Mrs. Ellet.

THE HOMESTEAD—THE FAMILY.

In one of the lower counties of Maryland, and in one of the first settled neighbourhoods, surrounded by forest-crowned hills, and embosomed in trees, stood the mansion of the Brotherton family. It was a queer, old-fashioned house, with many gable-ends, and a very steep roof, and windows of diamond-shaped panes set in lead sashes. These sashes, with the bricks of which the house was built, had been imported from "the old country."

It was the pride of the Brotherton family that they had come over with Lord Baltimore; but whether as friend or footman to his lordship tradition saith not. I can go no further back than Hubert Brotherton, who flourished about a hundred years ago. He was a notorious fox-hunter, and a celebrated *bon vivant* in general; gave great hunts, great dinners, and great balls, and discovered a great talent for the manufacture of wings, wherewith his acres might fly away. His wings "worked extremely well," as inventors and patentees say; so well that Hubert Brotherton, who at twenty-one could stand upon the highest point in his native county, and, looking around, call all the land in sight his own, died at forty a poor man. It is a good illustration of the vicissitudes of life, the fact that the descendants of Hubert Brotherton,

"It is growing dusky, my dear child; ring for Broom to bring in the lights," said Mrs. Brotherton, as she rolled up her valance, and put it in her basket.

Sybil complied by putting away her own work, and ringing a little silver hand-bell that stood upon the table. There were no bell-wires running through the house, like nerves through the human body, in those days.

The door opened, and, in answer to the summons, an old grey-haired domestic appeared, with a candle in each hand. Making a reverence as he entered, he set the light upon the table, saying, as he did so, "Madam, a man from Colonel John Henry Hines is waiting without. He brings a message for you."

"Bring him in, Broom."

"Yes, madam," and, with a second obeisance, the old man left the room.

There was this peculiarity about Mrs. Brotherton and her household, that, from a limited intercourse with the world, and a familiar acquaintance with stately old dramas and novels of the last century, the old lady had acquired a somewhat stiff and courtly manner of speaking and acting, except when thrown off her guard by strong feeling. This stately manner was particularly admired by her two old servants, Katy and Broom, who copied it upon all possible occasions.

"Sarvint, madam—sarvint, miss," bowed the smart footman of Colonel Hines, as he entered the presence of the ladies.

"I understand you bear a message from Colonel Hines," said Mrs. Brotherton.

"Yes, madam; Colonel John Henry sends his 'spects, and says, with your permission, he will do himself the honour of calling, with his sister, in his carriage, to take Miss Brotherton to the ball to-morrow evening."

"Convey my grateful acknowledgments to Colonel Hines, and inform him that I shall be pleased to consign Miss Brotherton to his guardianship for the evening."

Overawed by the dignity and bewildered by the eloquence of the old lady, the man bowed and left the room, followed by Broom.

manifested in her great solicitude in keeping her children from forming acquaintances or connections with the *nouveaux riches* of the neighbourhood. Her benevolence had made great inroads upon her small fortune; and, for her thirdly-mentioned distinguishing trait, her romance of disposition, so far swept her flights of fancy, that, at the age of sixty, she would look upon her beautiful Sybil and wish she could send her "home," as she fondly termed Old England, where she felt sure her lovely child would captivate the heart of some baron, earl, or duke. There was one rare feature in her mind more charming than even her benevolence. It was the simple, childlike trustfulness of disposition that led her to reverse the rule of the worldling, and to believe every man and woman to be perfectly good until she had experimentally found them to be otherwise.

Sybil Brotherton was a slight fair girl, with a broad white forehead, large pensive blue eyes, and a sweet smile; a child of gentle and graceful movements, of low sweet tones, and of loving and pious heart. Sybil, too, was fanciful—she could not have been otherwise; and so gently had she treated her partners at the village dancing-school, she thought them all sadly unlike the courtly Sir Charles Grandison and the stately Lord Mortimer; and she set down this world of reality to be a marvellously "flat, stale, and unprofitable" place to live in, and life itself, without a handsome and rich lover, to be a very dull story founded upon fact.

THE MESSENGER—THE NOVEL-READERS.

It was evening: the ground was covered with snow, and the last rays of the setting sun lit up into blazing splendour the icicles pendent from the pine trees that crowned the hills surrounding Brotherton Hall. In a quaint old wainscoted parlour, before a blazing hickory fire, sat Mrs. Brotherton and Sybil. The old lady was employed in knotting a valance, the young one in tambouring a muslin apron. Before them stood a little, round, spider-legged tea-table, covered with a damask cloth, and set out with a service of grotesque old china.

"Why, in the first place, dear grandmother, he is quite an old gentleman, near fifty, is he not?"

"Colonel Hines is forty-seven years of age, quite in the noon of life."

"And I in the morning twilight," said Sybil sadly.

"Any other objection, Sybil?"

"Then he is short and thick, and has a broad red face, and a bald head, and a big—that is, a large—I mean, a stout—in a word, he is a round old gentleman, who gets into a great heat when he dances."

"Miss Brotherton, I am shocked, I am humiliated at your language," said the old lady, trying to look severely at her pet. "Now, do me the favour to ring for Broom to remove the tea equipage."

When the table was clear and the fire replenished, "Now, Broom," said Mrs. Brotherton, "bring in the box of books that last arrived from Baltimore, and open it."

The box was brought in, and the lid forced off, and the wealth of entertainment displayed, all in handsome bindings. Old Broom was on his knee at the box, officiating as gentleman-usher to the books.

"There, Broom, hand me that book in red—ah! 'The Romance of the Forest.'"

"O grandmother, let us read that—that must be very interesting."

"Here, my child, take it," said the old lady, forgetting her displeasure. "Hand me those others, Broom—'The Bandit's Bride,' ah ha!"

"O grandmother, that! that! let 's read *that* to-night."

"Stay, my love, let us look further. You are too excitable," said the old lady, continuing her examination with intense interest. "'The Young Protector,' 'The Royal Captives,' 'The Children of the Abbey'——"

"Indeed! O grandmother, that! that! we 've heard so much about that! *Do* let 's read that to-night."

"Very well, then, my dear, lay it by. Here, Broom, take these books upstairs, and put them in the book-case; and then go and tell Katy to bring in half a dozen eggs and a bottle of port. (We will have some mulled wine before we retire to rest, darling," said she in a low voice

"Broom!" said he, "what the old 'oman mean by that? She gwine to let the gal go?"

"Mr. Trimble!" said Broom, drawing himself up stiffly, "in de first place, *my* name is Mr. Broomley, and not Broom; *my lady* is Madam Brotherton, and no old woman; and my *young* lady is Miss Brotherton, of Brotherton Hall, and no gal."

"Well, then, but what am I to tell the Colonel? that she is going to let the gal—I mean the young lady—go?"

"Bress your stupidity, Mrs. Brotherton is pleased to sign Miss Brotherton to his garden for the evening."

"'Fore de Lord, I don't know what that is; but I shall tell Colonel Hines that she is going to let the gal go."

"Look here, you man in livery, you green-and-yellow poll-parrot, if you call Miss Brotherton a gal again I'll cane you; so be off with the message, now," said old Broom, flourishing his blackthorn stick.

The man went his way, and old Broom went into the kitchen to carry in tea. Having set supper upon the table, and seen the ladies seated, he took his stand behind the chair of Mrs. Brotherton.

"There, you may leave the room now, Broom. If we should need anything Miss Brotherton will ring."

The old man went out.

"Now, my dear Sybil," said the old lady, "but for the kind attention of Colonel Hines I should not permit you to attend this ball, for I do not wish the face of my granddaughter to be seen too often at these village balls."

"Indeed, dear grandmother, if Colonel Hines is to attend me there, I would rather not go."

"And *why*, my dear? What objections have you to Colonel Hines? Is he not very polite and attentive?"

"Yes, madam, oppressively so."

"Then permit me to inform you that the attentions of Colonel Hines are a distinguished honour, even to Miss Brotherton."

"Yet, indeed, dear grandmother, I would fain dispense with the honour."

"Explain your antipathy if you please, Sybil."

she is in her "best bib and tucker," when Katy declared she "looked like any angel" (angels don't wear white satin, Mechlin lace, and pearls, Katy). Sybil Brotherton was rather below the middle stature, with a slender frame, yet full-formed, with rounded and tapering limbs, and a grace so natural that every movement expressed the poetry of motion. Her forehead was broad, high, and white; her eyes large, clear, and blue; her lips full, glowing, and beautiful. Her complexion was of that delicate and transparent white, so seldom seen except in consumptives, and in her cheeks was burning that fire of death that so resembles the rich rose of health. Her dark brown hair fell in long and shining ringlets upon her graceful neck and rounded bosom. Her pure and delicate beauty was set off to advantage by the rich dress of white satin and Mechlin lace, and the bandeau of pearls contrasted well with her dark hair. The carriage of Colonel Hines drew up before the door at eight o'clock, and Sybil, carefully wrapped in her velvet mantle and hood, was handed in and driven off. On the morning after the ball Mrs. Brotherton and Sybil were seated at breakfast, when the former said, "You must now tell me, darling, whom you saw at the ball, and who were your partners in the dance."

"Well, dear grandmother, there was the same old set. The Etheringtons, and the Somervilles, and the Kinlocks, and the —— Oh, by the way, Hector Kinlock presented the Honourable Meredith Mills, one of our representatives in Congress. He is from the lower part of the county, but he has purchased Blocksley Place, and is coming to reside in this neighbourhood."

"Ah! Meredith Mills! What sort of a person is he, my dear?"

"Why, he is a young man—talented, I rather think—agreeable—and—not married, grandma, if you mean that," said Sybil, with a sly smile.

"I am sorry to see you rather disposed to levity, my dear Sybil; pray avoid it. Meredith Mills—the name is familiar. Oh, yes! certainly, I know the family—a very old family, originally from Lincolnshire; came over with

to Sybil.) "And then, Broom, if you and Katy wish, you can come in and listen to the reading."

Much pleased, the old man hastened to execute his mission. Now, do not think, gentle reader, that there was any inconsistency between Mrs. Brotherton's pride and her practice of admitting her old domestics to her evening readings. Her people, as she called them, had grown up with her—they were old and tried servants, perfectly faithful and respectful. And she had long observed with what greedy ears they would linger in the room and listen while she read.

Well, old Katy soon brought in her knitting, and old Broom followed her with his cards and wool; and one sat on a low seat in one corner of the fireplace, and the other on a cricket in the opposite corner, quiet, attentive, and pleased. Mrs. Brotherton and Sybil sat before the fire, with a work-stand between them, upon which stood a brightly-burning lamp, work-basket, scissors, snuffers, &c. The old lady wiped her spectacles, put them on, opened her book, and commenced reading, amid profound silence, to most attentive and interested auditors. Sybil employed herself with her tambour-frame. When Mrs. Brotherton grew weary of reading aloud she would pass the book to Sybil, and take up her knotting. Miss Brotherton would then lay aside her work and read for an hour; and in that way they would agreeably relieve each other until it was time to retire to rest. Then old Broom would mull the wine, lay the cloth, and set out a few light sponge-cakes. After Mrs. Brotherton and Sybil had partaken of the refreshments, the remainder was carried into the kitchen for the solace of the old servants. Family prayer concluded the evening, and the little circle separated for the night.

THE BALL AND THE BEAUX.

The next day was a busy one with Mrs. Brotherton and Sybil. At length, at seven o'clock, Miss Brotherton was arrayed for the festival. As I have never minutely described Sybil Brotherton I had better do it now, while

you to the care of any one. When I cannot attend you myself to public places you must remain at home."

They were interrupted by a knock at the hall-door and the entrance of old Broom, who informed the ladies that two gentlemen, Mr. Mills and Mr. Middleton, had called, and were waiting in the drawing-room.

"Go in and see them, my dear Sybil. I will come presently," said Mrs. Brotherton.

As Sybil entered the drawing-room Mr. Middleton advanced and led her to a seat, with the courtly grace of "sixty years since," hoping that Miss Brotherton had suffered no inconvenience from the fatigue of the preceding evening, or from the ride through the night air.

Miss Brotherton had suffered no inconvenience, and was much obliged.

Sybil then addressed herself to Mr. Mills, and trusted that he would find the neighbourhood pleasant and the neighbours agreeable.

Mr. Mills was pleased with the neighbourhood, and anticipated much pleasure from a more intimate acquaintance with its residents.

At this moment the door opened, and Mrs. Brotherton entered. Both gentlemen arose from their seats, and Sybil named Mr. Mills—Mr. Middleton—Mrs. Brotherton. The latter gentleman met Mrs. Brotherton, led her to the sofa, and took a seat near her. Mrs. Brotherton expressed to Mr. Middleton her gratification at forming his acquaintance. Mr. Middleton bowed reverently, and expressed his deep sense of the honour conferred upon him. The conversation then became general. Mr. Middleton quite won the heart of Mrs. Brotherton, by descanting upon the beauties of Brotherton Hall, its antique look, its picturesque situation, its pleasant locality, &c. Mrs. Brotherton, in acknowledgment, begged that he would frequently honour the Hall with his presence. All this time Miss Brotherton was trying to amuse the Honourable Meredith Mills, and was in no small degree astonished and pleased at the wondrous *penchant* her grandmother had conceived for "the portrait-painter." The problem was soon solved. The gentlemen arose to take leave.

the Calverts—certainly, the Mills of Meredith Place; and coming to live in our neighbourhood; and not married ——"

"And very much smitten with Sybil Brotherton, and coming to see her this morning."

"Sybil!" exclaimed the old lady, gravely looking over the top of her spectacles.

"My dear grandmother, you know one must be merry the day after a ball, if they are not fatigued."

"And is Mr. Mills coming here this morning?"

"He said that he would do himself the honour of calling on us this morning."

"And what did you reply?"

"Why, that Mrs. Brotherton would be happy to receive him."

"That was correct. Did you form any other new acquaintances, Sybil?"

"N—n—o, madam; none except ——"

"Except whom?"

"Nobody, in fact, but ——"

"But whom?"

"But a young gentleman who came with Mr. Mills."

"And who was he?"

"A young artist."

"Humph! you are reserved, Sybil. What was his name?"

"Middleton."

"And he was very agreeable."

"Dear grandmother, I never said so."

"And you were very much pleased with him."

"Dear grandmother, pleased with a gentleman at the first interview! I thought you had a better opinion of me."

The old lady smiled.

"Oh, a gentleman, was he? I thought you said he was a painter."

"An artist, grandmother, an artist; and surely an artist is a gentleman, if any man is."

"Humph! that depends upon whether he paints for money or amusement. But I shall not, in future, trust

praised, was Harold Middleton, the portrait-painter; and the little drab-coloured gentleman, in light hair and a grey coat, was the Honourable Meredith Mills of Meredith Place."

"I hope you do not jest with me, Miss Brotherton," said the old lady, looking curiously, between surprise, pique, and embarrassment.

"Or rather, you hope I *do* jest, dear grandmother; but I speak truth. However, your rule, I suppose, still holds good. This is but an exception."

The old lady seemed consoled, and remarked, with a smile, "There is one thing, however, that pleases me, my dear Sybil. It is, that you kept that young man Middleton at a proper distance, while you showed fitting respect for Mr. Meredith Mills."

Sybil smiled, but there was something sad, almost remorseful, in her smile.

A few weeks passed away. Sybil met young Middleton often in society; indeed, he even came often to the house, where Mrs. Brotherton, in consideration of the pressing invitation extended to him on his first visit, continued to treat him with civility, if, indeed, the charming manners of the young man had not put it out of her power to treat him otherwise. Then his unembarrassed manner to Miss Brotherton led off the suspicion that his affections were interested in her. The following circumstance opened the eyes of Mrs Brotherton to the real position of the parties.

Colonel Hines had proposed for the hand of Miss Brotherton. Mrs. Brotherton had made known his wishes to her grand-daughter, who received the news of the revival and pressing of the obnoxious suit with so much agitation and distress that Mrs. Brotherton perceived that her heart was no longer free, and, by her questions, soon ascertained who had become its master. Upon the same evening it happened that young Middleton called, and was received by Mrs. Brotherton alone, and coldly. Sybil was weeping in her own room. Young Middleton, perceiving the change in her manner, suspected the truth;

Madam Brotherton hoped they would soon repeat their visit. The gentlemen declared that they should feel too happy in accepting her invitation, and they bowed themselves out. When the sound of their horses' feet had died away, "Well, what do you think of our visitors, grandma?" asked Sybil gaily.

"Why, my dear Sybil, I think Mr. Meredith Mills a remarkably handsome, intellectual, and polished young gentleman. Of Mr. Middleton I had not much opportunity of judging. He, as I regretted to see, had his attention entirely engrossed by yourself during the whole time of his visit. One thing, however, did strike me. I never saw a fairer illustration of the fact that good blood will show itself through all disguises. Now, observe those two men—they were both equally well dressed, perhaps equally well educated, and received in the same society; but now observe the difference. In Mr. Meredith Mills you saw the high-bred air of a gentleman of family; in Mr. Middleton was equally visible the *mauvaise honte* of a low person. Mr. Mills was easy, graceful, and conversable; Mr. Middleton shy, awkward, and embarrassed. I never saw a fairer illustration of high-bred aristocracy and of upstart vulgarity."

Sybil listened to this disquisition with eyes and lips wide open with astonishment.

"Why, my dear grandmother," said she, "are you not under a mistake? Which of the gentlemen did you suppose to be Mr. Mills?"

"Why, of course, the Honourable Meredith Mills was the gentleman who conversed with *me*, while you were so much occupied with the other young person."

A smile flashed into the eyes and curled around the lips of Sybil for an instant, and vanished, as she said seriously, "My dear grandmother, it 's all owing to my awkward presentation, I suppose; but you have made the most amusing mistake. The tall, handsome, graceful, accomplished, and high-bred man who led you to the sofa, and who charmed you so much by his intellectual conversation, and whom you have so highly approved and

waring! I will go to England with them—my *granddaughter*, Lady Mainwaring!" said the old lady, ringing all the changes on the coveted title. "I must have a wedding. I will get Otto, the great Baltimore confectioner, and Sampson, the French cook, to provide the breakfast. Then we must go to Baltimore ourselves, and speak to Madame Modeste to furnish the bridal dress and veil, and we must consult her upon the trousseau generally"—and "Countess of Mainwaring!" muttered the old lady, as she sank to sleep that night. "How well a coronet will grace that angel brow!"

"God help old madam!" said Katy to Broom that night, at the kitchen fire; "she has been talking to herself all the evening."

Young Middleton's return to England was indefinitely postponed; and, before the trees had put forth their leaves, or the snow was melted off the ground, Sybil Brotherton was the wife of Harold Middleton. The young couple, much to the comfort of Mrs. Brotherton, had concluded to spend the first year of their married life at Brotherton Hall. Mrs. Brotherton had ascertained that the father of her son-in-law was the *third* son of Lord Mainwaring, and that at least three persons stood between him and the earl's coronet; but at least he was the grandson of a peer, and that was much.

THE YOUNG WIFE.

How soon was the sweet dream of Sybil broken! How soon the beautiful illusion of Sybil dispelled! How soon "the veiled prophet" of her idolatry stood forth in all his hideous deformity! A few months after their marriage, Harold Middleton began to absent himself from his young wife all day, and sometimes all night. The playful and loving expostulations of Sybil were kindly taken at first; and explanations, which she received with confiding affection, were given of his absence. But even this disguise was at last thrown off.

About twelve months after her marriage Sybil was sitting reading with her grandmother in their little parlour. Earlier than usual, the old lady complained of

for he had become well acquainted with the old lady's foible. He therefore soon arose to take his leave, remarking, as he did so, "This is probably the last opportunity I shall have of paying my *devoirs* to the ladies of Brotherton Hall; for my grandfather, the Earl of Mainwaring, has written to command my immediate return to England."

"Sir, did I hear aright? Your grandfather, the Earl of Mainwaring!" exclaimed the old lady, thrown off her guard.

"Yes, madam,' said young Middleton quietly. "Permit me to wish you a good evening. Pray present my most respectful regards to Miss Brotherton. Good evening, madam."

"No, no; do not go yet. You must take leave of Sybil, and—pray do me the favour to touch the bell. Perhaps you would take some refreshments."

The young man complied with her request; and, "Broom!" said she to the old servant who answered the summons, "go and give my compliments to Miss Brotherton, and ask her *why* she keeps us waiting thus, and desire her to come down; and, Broom, serve refreshments. Mr. Middleton has ridden far, and would like something. Mr. Middleton, *do* be seated."

A sinister smile flitted across the young man's countenance as he sat down. Greatly wondering at the summons, Sybil entered the room, followed by Broom with refreshments. The young man's hurry seemed now to have evaporated, as eventually did the strong necessity for his going to England. It was late when he left the house. Sybil pleaded fatigue, and retired soon to bed. Many a fine aerial castle did Mrs. Brotherton build that evening for her pet.

"Humph! indeed!" soliloquised the old lady, as she walked restlessly about her chamber floor. "Who would have thought it? Lord Mainwaring! I wonder whether young Middleton's father is the eldest son of the earl, the heir to his titles and estates! I should like so much to know. Dear me! the Earl of Mainwaring! The Earl and *Countess* of Mainwaring! Lord and Lady Main-

there but sullen anger, she arose from her seat, and, taking her night-lamp, was about to leave the room. Seeming to take a second thought when she reached the door, she turned back, and, setting down her lamp, approached her husband; and, putting her arms around his neck, and pressing her lips upon his brow, she murmured, "Do not be angry with me, dear Harold. I will not stay up for you another time, if you will love me now."

This caress was received in sullen silence, and not returned. The gentle words of Sybil remained unnoticed. Unclasping her arms, after a few moments she withdrew to her chamber, and sought her pillow, where, like a child as she was, she soon wept herself to sleep.

"A poor, pale, whining creature," muttered Middleton, looking after his wife as she left the room. "If I had known that this old place was in Chancery I would have seen her in Jericho before I would have married her. Strange that I never happened to hear it until to-night. And you, Inez! my bright, my beautiful, my dark-browed girl of Italy! Was it for this I cast you away? No matter; fetters not riveted with gold fall easily from my wrists, bright Inez! And if this property should slip from its present possessors ——"

Middleton fell into a deep reverie, so that it was near morning when he retired to his chamber.

A few months passed, and the case in Chancery was decided against the Brothertons, and a suit entered to eject them from the premises. From this time the mask of hypocrisy assumed by Middleton, and which had occasionally slipped aside, was now laid by for ever. With what funds he could wrest from his gentle wife, or, through her, from Mrs. Brotherton, he would frequent L——, the county seat, and spend whole days and nights in dissipation. Sybil grew pale and melancholy, and, having lost all esteem and respect for her husband, took no further comfort in her love; and, indeed, with her delicate health and timid temper, she generally felt rather relieved, when, after she had given him all the money she could raise, he would take himself off for a week, for then

fatigue and drowsiness, and retired to rest. Sybil did not seek her chamber; but, desiring Broom to bring some refreshments, and sending Katy to her chamber for his dressing-gown and slippers, she drew her chair to the fire, to await the coming of her husband. She could not read; she laid her book down; her very face breathed joy. Sybil had ascertained that she would become a mother; and, with the confiding love of a young wife, she wished to make her husband a sharer of her joy. Long did Sybil wait, but not impatiently; for her face was still beaming with gentle happiness, when the sound of a horse's feet, followed by an impatient rap at the door, caused her to start joyfully up, and go to open it herself, exclaiming, as she met her husband, "O dear Harold, how glad I am that you are come at last! I have been waiting so long for you!"

Repulsing her offered caress, he said sternly and angrily, "I have before this intimated my desire that you should retire to rest at your usual hour, instead of sitting up for me, Mrs. Middleton. Do not give me occasion to repeat the injunction."

A woman of more spirit would have resented this; a woman of less sensibility might not have felt it. Poor Sybil, from the very manner of her education, as well as from her native temperament, was the victim of a morbid sensibility. This was the first occasion upon which Middleton had spoken unkindly to her, and she felt it deeply. Pale and trembling, she sank into her seat; Middleton threw himself upon the sofa. The coffee grew cold, the oysters became turbid in their liquor, the candles burned low, the fire died out, and Sybil's sweet news remained untold. Silent tears were stealing down her cheeks. This seemed rather to harden the heart of her husband, who now said sternly, "This course of conduct looks very like a wilful disregard of my wishes, Mrs. Middleton. Perhaps they were not explained with sufficient clearness?"

Sybil started as the first angry tones of his voice fell upon her ears; then looking into his face with an expression of distressing inquiry, and meeting nothing

"Weeping again, Sybil, my poor child?" said the old lady, sinking into a chair, and holding out her arms to her grand-daughter. "Come to my bosom, my dear child. What is your grief, Sybil?"

"Nothing, my dear grandmother, only I am not very well," said Mrs. Middleton, pleased, yet wondering at the temporary revival of the old lady's intellect.

"No, my poor child; you are far from well. I see that. You must go to bed, Sybil, and I will send for a physician. Katy, tell Broom to saddle a horse, and ride over to Dr. Hall's, and ask him to come over directly; that Mrs. Middleton is ill; and, Katy, do you carry an armful of wood up into your young lady's chamber. Lean on me, my dear Sybil, and come upstairs."

Lean on her! Poor old trembler! There was something inexpressibly touching in her protection of Sybil, while she herself so much needed support.

Mrs. Middleton gained her room, and was assisted to bed. Mrs. Brotherton took her seat in a large arm-chair by her side. Sybil repressed her complaints, that she might not give pain to the tender-hearted old lady. The physician lived ten miles off; the night was far advanced, and he had not yet arrived. Sybil lay perfectly quiet and silent, except when she would entreat her grandmother to go to rest, and leave old Katy to watch.

"No, no, darling; no, no, my poor child," would be the old lady's answer.

Sybil at last said, "Dear grandmother, I would like to go to sleep, but I cannot sleep while I see you there. Will you not retire to bed?"

"Are you better, then, my love? I am so glad! Well, as soon as I see you asleep I will go."

"Good night, then, dear grandmother!"

"God bless you, darling!"

Sybil closed her eyes and affected to sleep. After a few moments the old lady arose and looked over her, but she could not see by the dim light of the taper the contracted brow and the clenched hands of the sufferer.

"She is asleep!" murmured the old lady. "Bless her, poor thing! I was afraid she was going to be sick." And

she felt secure, at least, from personal violence and danger to herself and her unborn babe; for, alas! Sybil Middleton, the delicate, the sensitive, and the refined, had felt the weight of her husband's hand in anger, had trembled for her life in his presence. But these scenes of violence would generally occur after Middleton had been drinking freely. And Sybil had another sorrow. She perceived, with grief and dismay, that her beloved grandmother was falling into premature dotage. The trials of the old lady's age had been too great for her to bear. The loss of the Brotherton estate, the unworthiness of her son-in-law, the misery of her darling grand-daughter, and the prospective ejectment from the home of her youth —all pressed upon the old lady's mind, and at length broke it down.

THE YOUNG MOTHER.

"Stay with me to-night, dear Harold; I am ill, and I am frightened. Stay with me to-night," pleaded Sybil, timidly taking the hand of her husband as he was about to leave the house.

"I am not a physician, Mrs. Middleton," replied he coldly.

"Yet you are more to me—the only one who can give me comfort and strength in my coming trial. I am weak and fearful. I know I am a fool, yet bear with me awhile, and—stay with me to-night."

"You have your grandmother with you, Mrs. Middleton."

"Alas, my poor grandmother! she herself needs care and attention. She is incapable of giving me comfort. Oh, do not leave me!" exclaimed she suddenly, catching his hand, as he was about to go. "Stay with me to-night."

"You are importunate, Mrs. Middleton," said he, releasing himself; "and I regret to say that I cannot comply with your request. Good evening." And he left the room.

Sybil turned aside to weep, but wiped her tears hastily away as she perceived her poor grandmother totter into the room.

but she lay in a stupor, insensible to all that was passing around her. Miss Rachel Hines kindly volunteered to remain at Brotherton Hall to nurse the invalid.

At length Sybil was raised from her bed of illness, and, in a fortnight from the day on which she first sat up, she left her room. Miss Rachel Hines had returned home. It was evening, and Sybil said to herself, "I will surprise Harold, and please him, by joining him at tea."

And, wrapping her shawl around her, she descended to the parlour. Old Broom was just setting tea upon the table as she entered. In answer to her inquiry the old man told her that Mr. Middleton was talking with a strange man in the entry. Desiring Katy to go up and remain with her infant, and telling Broom to be in waiting upon the table, Sybil took her seat. Middleton entered, and, as he sat down in his place, remarked, "I am glad to see you out of your chamber, Sybil, for we shall be obliged to get out of the house very soon."

"As you please, dear Harold. I am ready to accompany you when and where you please."

Harold Middleton smiled darkly.

"But it is not as I please, Mrs. Middleton. Let me tell you it is far more easy to get rid of one handsome establishment than to find another."

Not comprehending the cause of his ill-humour, but seeing from his inflamed face that he had been drinking, Sybil answered gently and soothingly, "Dearest Harold, believe me, I am willing to do just as you see fit. I had as lief remain here as go elsewhere if you prefer it."

"You are dull, Mrs. Middleton. You do not seem to comprehend that a writ of ejectment has been served upon us, and that we *must* go."

"Oh, it is sad indeed to leave our home upon compulsion! But, dearest Harold, do not call me Mrs. Middleton, and speak so coldly to me. You know I have no one to love me now but you."

"You are irritable and not very agreeable this evening, Mrs. Middleton. I think you have left your chamber too soon. I advise you to return to it."

Sybil left the room.

she glided from the room, telling Katy that she would dispense with her services for that night, and charging her to sleep by the bedside of her young lady in case she should need anything.

In an hour after Sybil Middleton pressed her first-born child to her bosom.

"Thank God for my beautiful boy! Thank God for my spared life!" fervently exclaimed the exhausted mother, as she received the babe in her arms.

"Now, my dear young lady, as you are comfortable, hadn't I better wake madam?"

"No, Katy; let her sleep, and I must rest now. How proud Harold will be of his son! How happy poor grandmother will feel that my trial is safely over!" was the last thought of Sybil as she sank to rest.

"O my dear young lady! my dear young lady!" exclaimed old Katy, bursting into the chamber of Mrs. Middleton at early dawn.

"Why, what is the matter, Katy?" inquired Sybil in affright.

"Your poor grandmother! your good old grandmother!"

"Katy, what *is* the matter? What of my dear grandmother?"

"Dead in her bed! dead in her bed!"

With a smothered shriek Sybil fell back on her pillow.

Old Broom, who, unable to find the doctor, had returned late at night, was despatched to Colonel Hines's. The colonel and his sister quickly obeyed the summons, and hastened to Brotherton Hall. The family physician also arrived early in the morning, and a messenger was despatched to Mr. Middleton at L——. In the meantime Colonel Hines and his sister Rachel took the direction of affairs, and truly the kind offices of these good Samaritans were needed, for Mrs. Brotherton had expired during the night in a fit of apoplexy, and Mrs. Middleton was lying extremely ill and delirious. Mr. Middleton returned late in the evening. On the fourth day from her decease the funeral of Mrs. Brotherton took place. It was attended by all the gentry of the neighbourhood. The wild delirium of Mrs. Middleton had been subdued;

"It seems a long time until the fall; but then, I suppose, I am weak to feel so," said Sybil, repressing a sigh.

The next few days were employed in selling off the furniture and plate at Brotherton Hall. A few family portraits and some pieces of old-fashioned furniture were reserved for the use of Mrs. Middleton during the summer.

Two weeks from this time Sybil found herself the occupant of a small cottage on the suburbs of Baltimore. Katy was retained in her service upon reduced wages; and old Broouf, who had "saved a penny," went to live with some of his relations.

It was the morning of Middleton's departure. His trunks were all on board, and the packet was to sail with the first tide.

At early dawn Middleton and Sybil stood at the cottage-gate.

"And will you *indeed* send for me in the fall, dear Harold?" said Sybil sadly.

"Why, *certainly*, Sybil; why do you doubt me?" said Middleton, smilingly.

"I do not doubt you; but I love to hear you promise again and again."

"Well, I must be gone. Farewell, Sybil."

"Good-by, good-by! Oh, come back! let me take a long, long look into your eyes—a look that will last me till we meet ——"

"Well, will that do, Sybil? There, there—I must go. Be cheerful; farewell. I will send for you soon."

And they parted—he with a lie on his lips, rejoicing in his release; she to her lonely hearth, profoundly grateful for his seeming kindness, and building many bright hopes upon his faithless promises.

KATY'S MISHAPS IN THE CITY.

The leaves were falling, and the cold north-west wind was blowing them in drifts about the cottage of Mrs. Middleton. Old Katy was roaming about the garden, gathering sticks to make a fire; in the course of her gleaning she passed into the front yard. Seeing the figure of an old man leaning on a stick at the gate, she dropped

On the morning succeeding this conversation Middleton left home for Baltimore, and was absent about a week. At the end of that time he returned, and, entering the parlour where his wife sat at work, informed her that he had received a letter from his father requiring his immediate presence in London to attend a lawsuit, and that he should go in the next packet, which would sail in two weeks.

"Very well, dear Harold; we must make some provision for the two poor old people in the kitchen, and I shall be so glad to go. I like the arrangement very much. I shall be delighted to cross the ocean; and so happy, so very happy to know your father and mother. I shall find parents again in them; and they will be *so* pleased, will they not, to see our babe, their grandchild? Oh, yes! I shall be quite ready in a week."

"Well, have you done, Sybil?"

Sybil raised her large, tender eyes to his countenance with an inquiring glance, and remained silent.

"I never contemplated taking *you* to England, Sybil; at least when I go. I do not, indeed, know how you would be received by my family. It will take, I fear, some considerable diplomacy to reconcile my father to this somewhat inconsiderate marriage of mine."

The blood rushed to the face of Sybil, and the tears to her eyes, to conceal which she stooped and raised her babe from the cradle.

"But this is my design. I will attend promptly my father's summons; meet him in London; and, after the hurry of business is over, I will endeavour to reconcile him to our marriage, then send or come for you and the child."

Mrs. Middleton was re-assured by his words, especially as his manner was kinder than usual, and he had called her "Sybil" through the conversation. She inquired, "And how long will it be, dear Harold, before you send?"

"Oh, in a few months from this—in the fall, probably; and, in the meantime, I will take a house for you in Baltimore for the summer."

for stealin' silver spoons! You don't know how I was hurt!"

"I can 'magine, Katy; I can 'magine. You know, though, you used to hear the old madam say as none of the people in cities ever come ober with Lord Baltimore so how can you 'spect better from them?"

"Well, I was going to tell you, Broom; but come in out of the wind—there's the baby! The very image of the old madam, ain't he? There, don't wake him; sit down. I was a-going to tell you that after that the young madam always wrote a line when she sent me to sell anything; and she sold almost all the silver she had to buy things and pay rent; for only think, Broom, people here have to pay for living in houses!"

"Pshaw! I could have told you that long ago."

"I didn't know it. Well, there's nothing left to sell now but the blade of the butter-knife and her thimble—that's *silver*, I mean; and what we are to do, now the winter's setting in, the Lord knows. We been living on black tea and rye bread all this summer. The poor child wanted me to go hire out where I could get wages and better living; but no, I says. If I've got a black skin I've got a white soul; and I ain't a-going to 'sert her in her 'fliction."

"No, no more I wouldn't, Katy. Dear, dear, dear," sighed the old man; "this is *very* 'stressing, very! But couldn't the young lady teach the pianner, or paint pictures, or diskiver some rich relations, like the 'stressed ladies in the story-books she used to read to us about?"

"Well, I often thinks o' that myself; and I thinks what's the good o' larnin' unless it helps people to get along in the world? But, poor thing! her mind is 'sturbed enough. Sometimes she does walk about a whole day looking for needlework; but she is a stranger, and gets no luck, and she comes home, and mopes and mopes. I 'vises her to smoke a pipe; but she wont take 'vice. I tells her, if it hadn't a been for smoking a pipe, I should have gone ravin' 'stracted mad when Colonel Hines (Heaven forgive him!) sold my poor dear gal to Georgy. My poor gal! my poor gal! your poor old mother will

her bundle and hastened forward, joyfully exclaiming, "Lor' a' mercy upon me, Broom! Is this *you!* *Is* this you? Bless your ole soul, I am *so* glad to see you once again in this worl'! Come in, come in; how have you been this long time?"

"Thanky, Katy, thanky. I 'm so-so, 'cept the rheumatics, and the phthisic, and the asthma and lumbago, and the liver complaint, and the consumption—except that, I enjoys pretty good health in general."

"'Deed! I 'm glad to hear you 're so hearty. It 's more than I am; I 'm troubled with a stiff neck."

"Yes, you were always stiff-necked, Katy."

Now, Broom, that was a libel on Katy!

"Well, Katy, how is the young madam and the little child, and when is she going to foreign parts?"

"Ah, poor dear child! I think she 's in a 'sumption, Broom. She used to be purty as a picter, Broom; now she 's all pale and thin, and her eyes are hollow. She 's never hearn a word from that vilyun (God forgive me!) that she married. She 's gone to the pos'-office now, poor dear heart! to see if there 's a letter for her. She seen in a newspaper how the ship that *he* went out in has comed back, and so she 's gone. But come in, Broom, out o' the cold; you shall see the child, poor little cretur! by the kitchen fire—no! by the kitchen fireplace—no fire there! Dunno when there will be."

"Why, you don't go to make out how the young madam wants for anything, do ye?"

"Don't want for nothing, don't she? I tell you, Broom, that vilyun (mercy on me!) never left her a single dollar—made out he 'd want all the money to carry him to foreign parts. *I* know, 'cause, you see, she wanted tea and sugar the day after he went away; and so she sent her silver spoons to be sold—sent 'em by me; and by the same token, the silversmiff where I took them took the spoons away from me, and sent for a cons'able, and had me 'rested on 'spicion of stealing them; yes, and 'rested me there all day, till the young lady could be sent for. Lor', Broom, how my feelings were hurted that day! that ever Catherine Ann Gallagher should be 'rested

The old man was as good as his word. In an hour a blazing fire was kindled in Sybil's room, and the tea-table spread with nice white bread and fresh butter, while a pot of fragrant hyson was drawing on the hearth. The babe was awake, sitting on the carpet, blowing a whistle with great glee. At last Sybil entered, pale, languid, and weary, and, dropping into a chair, held out her arms to the babe, who crawled fast upon his hands and knees to reach her lap.

"Ah! she 's got no letter," thought old Katy, as she came in to set the tea on the table.

"The silversmiff has been here, ma'am." ("Heaven forgive me for lying!" muttered she to herself.)

"The silversmith, Katy?"

"Yes, ma'am; and he fotch two dollars, as he said was due on the spoons; and so I took the money, ma'am, and bought some wood and some other things." ("Heaven look over fibbing!")

"Very well, Katy, that was a godsend indeed; but you left the babe to do this."

"No, ma'am; old Uncle Broom 'rived this morning, and I got him to go."

"Poor old man! Has he travelled all the way up here? Send him in to see me, Katy."

"'Scuse me, Mrs. Middleton; but did you get a letter, ma'am?"

"No, Katy; but to-morrow I will go and see the captain of the vessel; perhaps he has a letter or a message for me."

THE CAPTAIN'S NEWS.

The next morning, after an early breakfast, Sybil put her babe to sleep, and went her way in search of the captain of the packet in which her husband had left America. In going towards the vessel she had to pass through crowds of coarse women and rough men, whose ribaldry caused her nerves to tremble and her cheek to burn with shame. At length, finding it difficult to reach the vessel, which was lying off the shore, she inquired where the captain was likely to be found, and was directed to his

never see you again in this world. My poor dear gal! all the child I had in the world!" Here the poor old soul lost recollection of everything but her own sorrow, and sobbed hysterically.

"Don't cry, Katy! don't cry! that's a good 'oman!"

"Hush, Broom, hush! you never had no child sold away from you."

"No, Katy, because my wife was sold away from me the first year we were married, and I never had the heart to marry again."

"My poor gal! my poor child!"

"Come, Katy, don't take on so; don't, that's a dove!"

When the old creature had exhausted herself with weeping she wiped her eyes. Then Broom said to her, "You never told me, Katy, how it was that you were free and your child a slave."

"Why, you see, Broom, I was left to Colonel Hines by his uncle, but I was left to be free at twenty-five; and I had my little gal before I had served my time out, and so she was a slave. I had been living with Mrs. Brotherton ever since I was ten years old, and I was there when my poor gal was sold. She tried to prevent it, but couldn't. You were gone with Colonel Brotherton to the wars then. Don't ask me any more, please, Broom;" and the old creature fell to weeping again. At last, wiping her eyes, she said, "Well, well! well, well! maybe it will all come right in another world. Give me that bundle of chips, Broom; I must make a cup of tea for Mrs. Middleton against she comes. I wish I had a little wood to make a fire in her room."

"Now, you stop, old 'oman. How long before she 'll be back?"

"An hour or so."

"Well," said the old man, brightening up, "I 'll just tell you what I goin' to do. I goin' after a load of wood and a basket of good things; and I 'll just have 'em brought home, and don't you let on who sent them, 'cause the young lady might feel bad at 'ceiving a favour from the likes o' me, 'cause that 's a little worser than anything we ever heard about in the books at night."

post-office, and was asked by the clerk what she wanted, she answered, "That letter, if you please, sir."

"What letter, aunty?"

"Why, the letter from foreign parts, if you please."

"Yes; but whose letter?"

"Why, hizzen, sir! hizzen!"

"What name, old woman?"

"Why, Mr. Middleton, the gentleman as went to foreign parts."

The clerk looked over his list and answered, "There is nothing here for Mr. Middleton."

"The letter ain't for Mr. Middleton, sir."

"For whom, then, old woman?" said the clerk, growing impatient.

"Miss Sybil that was, sir; Miss Sybil Brotherton, of Brotherton Hall, come over with Lord Baltimore, sir," said Katy, curtseying at every clause.

"There is no letter here for Miss Brotherton."

"She's not Miss Brotherton now; she's Mrs. Middleton."

"Why, what a stupid old beast is this! Here, here is your letter."

"Thanky, sir; very kind of you, indeed, sir; thanky kindly. I wouldn't take a golden guinea for this letter."

It was raining hard when Katy left the office, and she looked around in despair, for Katy had no umbrella. A hackney-coach was standing near, and Katy looked longingly at it. Observing this, the driver said jeeringly, "A hack, ma'am?"

"Thank you kindly; yes, sir, if you please."

Finding a customer, the driver changed his tone, and let down his steps, and handed the old woman in with respectful alacrity, put them up again, jumped into his seat, and drove off.

"Dear me!" said old Katy, as she sat back in the carriage, "this is very nice and comfortable; so much better than sploshing through the mud and getting wet to the skin. I love the motion of a carriage, too; it tintillates one's feelings so pleasantly. What a very polite young man to offer me a ride; so different from

lodgings in the city. She hurried thither, was so lucky as to find him at home, and was shown into his presence. He was a fat, red-faced, self-satisfied looking man, who arose to receive her with rather an insolent leer.

"You are Captain Blackston, I presume?"

"At your service, miss."

"I am Mrs. Middleton."

"Ah! I beg your pardon, madam."

"My husband, Mr. Harold P. Middleton, went to Liverpool in your ship about six months since. I have come to inquire whether you have any letter or message from him for me, and whether he was in good health when he landed."

"Whew!" whistled the captain.

"Will you please to tell me, sir?"

"Why, madam, here seems to be a great mystery. Mr. Middleton certainly was my passenger to Liverpool; but he took with him a lady whom he called Mrs. Middleton, and whom I supposed to be his wife. Heavens! ma'am, don't faint here in my room!" exclaimed the captain, seizing the bell-rope, and ringing an alarm.

"William!" cried he energetically to the man that answered the bell, "call a hackney-coach for this lady."

Sybil mastered her emotion by a great effort, and entered the coach that had been called for her, for indeed her trembling limbs refused to convey her home. It took Sybil's last dollar, the produce of the sale of the butter-knife, to pay her fare. For many days Sybil remained almost stupefied with grief, sometimes wandering restlessly about, sometimes sitting for hours in one mournful position, sometimes catching up her infant and weeping passionately over it. Poor old Katy was distressed almost to death, but could not guess the cause of her acute sorrow. A few weeks from this time there was an arrival from Liverpool; and, a few days after, Sybil saw a letter advertised for her in the paper. Too weak to go herself, she hurried old Katy off to the office. Poor old Katy was always sure to fall into adventures when she was sent into the city. When she arrived at the

her letter, she retired to read it. She opened it eagerly. There was no inclosure; and merely remarking that little Hubert would go without his flannel some time longer, she began to read. Her cheek grew pale and paler as she read, the letter dropped from her hand, and she sat as one stricken with epilepsy. Presently the blood rushed back in torrents to her face; and, clasping her hands to her throbbing temples, she started up and paced the floor with irregular steps, exclaiming, "Oh, the fiend! the fiend!—yet not the fiend either, for there is something large about the devil, after all—the reptile! the reptile, rather! Coldly to tell me he does not care for me; falsely to tell me that he suspects my fidelity; to renounce his wife, to disown his child, and slander both to colour his baseness! Where sleeps the justice of God? What stays the thunderbolt, that it does not strike him down in his rampant wickedness?" and Sybil threw herself, writhing, upon the bed. The scathing thunder and lightning of passion passed, and the rain fell. Sybil wept as she murmured, "O Harold! Harold! I never thought to have felt towards thee thus! I never thought to have spoken of you so!"

Sybil sat pale, exhausted, and alarmed at the typhoon that had passed through her gentle soul.

"Great God!" said she, "this, then, is passion! this, then, is anger! Oh! now, indeed, I know there is no need of a lake of burning fire: our bosoms may be a hell, as mine has just proved; our own passions may be tormenting fiends, if there be no others."

Sybil sank upon her knees and prayed; and from this moment may be dated the commencement of her true knowledge of God, of herself, of the value of life and the use of suffering, of the reality of another and a happier state of existence. Amid the confusion, the storm, the whirlwind of her excited passion, arose "the still small voice" that whispered, "Peace, be still!" and "Be not afraid; it is I!" Sybil arose from her prayer, calm, composed; prospects became clearer before her mental vision, and she thought,—

"Though it is all over now with me and my husband,

other people. Ain't he got manners! I shouldn't wonder if his family didn't come over with Lord Baltimore. What nice soft cushions!"

The end of this soliloquy brought Katy to Mrs. Middleton's door. The "very polite young man" jumped from his seat, and, letting down the steps, handed Katy out.

"I am very much obliged to you indeed, sir, for your kindness, sir. I'll do you a favour whenever I have a chance."

"Very well; you're quite welcome; your money is just as good as anybody's else. It's a dollar."

"Sir?"

"It's a dollar."

"What's a dollar?"

"It's a dollar you owe me for bringing you home in my hack."

"Why, you invited me to ride in your hack; I never asked you! It was your own offer, and I thank you kindly. But you're not going to charge me now, I hopes?"

"Come, that's rich!"

"Good morning; I thank you kindly; I must go in now."

"Look here, old woman; none of your nonsense. Hand me that dollar."

"I sha'n't do no such a thing! I sha'n't do no such a thing! You 'vited me to take a ride, and I rid; and now I know it was all to cheat me out of a dollar."

"See here, you old devil; if you don't pay me that dollar I'll put you in the hands of a constable for swindling."

"Now, the mercy upon me, where am I to get a dollar from?"

Words now grew so high between the belligerent parties that the noise drew Mrs. Middleton to the door; and great was her perplexity when she understood the cause of dispute, for poor Sybil was penniless. Telling Katy that she was in the wrong, and explaining to the hackman Katy's mistake, and promising to pay him the next day, Sybil separated the combatants; and, receiving

was on the watch for her, and, meeting her, said, "O Mrs. Middleton! who you think is here, ma'am? General Brotherton is in the house. Come round the kitchen way to change your dress. I stole your best gown out of your room for you to put on there."

Be it known to the reader that there was no getting into Sybil's chamber but through the parlour; hence Katy's little piece of finesse. Sybil changed her dress quickly and went into the parlour.

"My dear Mrs. Middleton, or my sweet cousin Sybil—if you will permit me to call you so—how pleased I am at this opportunity of making your acquaintance!" cordially exclaimed General Brotherton, advancing to meet her. General Brotherton was a tall, stout man, with a broad, rosy, good-humoured face, and grey hair. Sybil was rather prepossessed with his appearance, and received him kindly and gracefully. After a little unimportant conversation, and a few remarks that led to the subject, General Brotherton observed, "I hope, my dear little cousin Sybil, you will do me the justice to believe that I would never have molested Mrs. Brotherton in the possession of her home during her life."

"Had she lived," replied Sybil, "Mrs. Brotherton would have acknowledged the kind intention, as I do, with deep gratitude."

"There is more I wished to say to you, my dear cousin Sybil; but I am a blunt old man, and may not know how to approach the subject with the necessary tact and delicacy, perhaps; and I may offend when I desire to please. If I do you will forgive me—will you not, my dear cousin? Well, this is what I wished to say: first, I have received your letter, and that has brought me to town. Of that more anon. Well, at the time my attorney entered suit for possession of the Brotherton property, I had heard that Mrs. Brotherton was dead, and that you, Sybil, had been some time married to a wild young fellow, the son of a man of wealth and family, and that you were both soon going to England. Hence the suit. But within a month, my dear cousin Sybil, I have heard another story that my cousin's husband was an impostor

and a villain; that he has left her and her child in poverty and want, excusing his base desertion by charging her with conjugal infidelity."

Sybil covered her burning face with her hands.

"O Lord!" she groaned, "I did not know, I did not dream, any one but myself knew of this!"

"It is all over our neighbourhood; but, of course, no one believes the wicked lie."

"You need not tell me that, sir," exclaimed Sybil, suddenly assuming the air of an outraged empress. "It is not within the wide range of possibility that my bitterest enemy, even were he the most credulous of fools, *could* believe such a thing; and I only wonder that any one should allude in my presence to such a story."

"There, there," muttered the General, seemingly much mortified, "I knew I should offend—I am such a rough old wretch—I blurt out things so."

His manner touched Sybil, and produced a reaction in her feelings. She hastened to say, "Forgive me, my dear sir; much trouble has made me very irritable, and I cannot bear the least allusion to that subject."

"Very well! All's right! Now, to come to the point and purpose of my visit. He has left you—that is plain. He has taken a foreign girl out with him—one Inez, Inez de—I forget, but I heard all about it. Well, I have no nearer relation than you in the world; and if you will return with me to Brotherton Hall, and live with me and my old wife, and be our daughter, and if you will apply to the legislature for a divorce, and have your son's name changed to that of Brotherton, I will execute a will, leaving, at my death, all the Brotherton property to you for your lifetime, and afterwards to your son. Come, Sybil, what say you?"

The vision of wealth, comfort, ease, and her child's interest arose before her "mind's eye;" her heart beat quickly, her face flushed.

"Come, my dear little cousin, what say you?"

The "still small voice" whispered the moral bearing of the question, and Sybil's heart paused in its violent beatings to listen—the flush died away from her face.

"Come, my dear Sybil, your answer."

"Will you give me a few days to think of this, my dear sir? and, in the meantime, believe me most grateful, most deeply grateful, for your kindness."

"Selfishness, pure selfishness, dear Sybil. My wife and I are lonesome in the old house: we want company. Think of my proposition a whole week, if you will—I don't like hasty decisions myself; but give me an answer at the end of that time. But mind, cousin Sybil, my conditions are positively unalterable; for I know very well, if *one* condition is not insisted upon, that just as soon as my old head is laid low, and you in possession of Brotherton Hall, that fellow would be sneaking back, and then you'd receive him. I know—oh, I know you women so well! He'd be so penitent! and you so forgiving! and in five or six years the Brotherton estate would be lost at the faro-table, and you would be beggared. Oh, I know—I know so well!" So saying, the old man took leave, entered his carriage, and was driven off.

Now, this proposition would not have tempted Sybil had a single spark of affection or esteem for her husband remained in her bosom; but it was not so. Her regard for Middleton had rather been a girlish fancy than a woman's deep affection, though, with a woman of Sybil's domestic tastes and affectionate heart, this regard would have deepened into love had not all respect been so soon lost. It was not his dissipation, nor his brutality, nor even his desertion of her, that had alienated the heart of his wife, but the cold, fierce, determined malignity of mind—the unmixed, unredeemed, irredeemable depravity of heart manifested throughout their entire married life, but most plainly discovered in the only letter he had ever written to her. Sybil's heart, therefore, was not defended against the solicitations of self-interest and maternal love by any affection lingering there. The test of principle could, therefore, be fairly applied to her unguarded, unsupported heart.

When the old man was gone Sybil sat down to consider. She was a stranger and friendless; her money was all spent, and her plate and jewellery all sold; her store

of fuel and provisions nearly exhausted; and winter coming on; lastly, and worse than all, she was deficient in that spirit of enterprise and energy required to meet the difficulties of her situation. Yet her mental debate was not very long; for all her early impressions and all her religious principles were against the proposed measure. In a few hours, therefore, Sybil's mind was fully made up.

The winter set in very cold. The air was frosty and nipping; snow-clouds darkened the sky. The day on which Sybil was to give her answer to General Brotherton dawned. It was intensely cold. As Sybil arose from her bed, shrinking and shuddering from the biting air, she covered up closely her sleeping boy, saying, "God bless thee, poor little one! You will freeze if I take you up to-day."

She passed into the parlour, where Katy was attempting to open the shutters. They were so bound with ice and blocked up with snow that it required considerable effort to push them open; and then the dreary aspect abroad—the ground deeply covered with snow, the sky gloomily darkened with clouds—was rendered still more dreary by the severely felt privations at home.

"My dear Miss Middleton, you're shivering from head to foot; let me go get your shawl!" exclaimed Katy, with chattering teeth.

"Do, Katy. But, Katy, is there no wood left to make a fire?" asked Sybil, shuddering.

"There's one blessed long log left. I going to split it up now. 'Deed and 'deed, Miss Middleton, if I was you, I'd take the child, and I'd go settle down on some o' my relations."

"Without an invitation, and perhaps without a welcome either, Katy?"

"I dunno, I dunno, Miss Sybil! Cross looks don't bite like this cold."

"No, Katy, but worse; one bites the fingers and toes, but the other gnaws at the heart."

Katy made no reply, but went out, and soon returned with her arm full of split wood, of which she made a fire.

"Now, Katy, what have we for breakfast?" inquired Sybil.

"One blessed pint of flour, and one teaspoonful of black tea."

"Then, Katy, get it ready, and we will eat our last meal by our last fire."

The poor meal was scarcely over, and the table removed, before there came a knock at the door, followed by the entrance of General Brotherton, who, taking a seat at the fire, unceremoniously exclaimed, "Oh, my dear little cousin, this is dreadful weather for travelling, yet we'll have to venture it; for when it moderates, and this snow melts, the roads will be impassable for a fortnight. Come, can you get ready by to-morrow morning? I wrote a week ago to the old lady, to look for us to-morrow evening."

"My dear cousin," said Sybil, "you must not think me ungrateful if I decline your kind offer."

"Decline it! Upon what ground? upon what ground?"

"I am not able to comply with its conditions."

"Which one? which one?"

"That of the divorce."

"Oh, is that all? Yes, you can; nothing is more easy. It is only to apply to the legislature, and ——."

"Understand me, my dear sir. I cannot conscientiously take any step towards the accomplishment of such a measure," said Sybil gently.

"Um—hum-m—ah, ha! I said so; I knew it; just like all other women—fools! stick to a bad man through thick and thin; and, if he runs away, wear the willow fifty years for his sake. But look here, Sybil—my poor Sybil—don't weep; look at your child; look at him, and have a little mercy on his tender frame and his many wants," said the old man, pointing to little Hubert.

Sybil *did* look at her thinly-clad and shivering child, and the appeal reached her heart; yet, mastering her rising emotion, she answered, "I have, I have! I have thought of all that; and yet—and yet I cannot, *indeed* I cannot, do as you recommend!"

"Then God help you!" exclaimed the old man, rising in pique. "I have no more to say. Good morning, my dear."

"Wont you sit longer, cousin?" asked Sybil timidly.

"No, no, I thank you. I shall be very busy all day to-day. I shall leave to-morrow."

The fire was dying out, and the room was getting chilly, so that Sybil did not press her invitation. She extended her hand cordially to the old man as she said, "You will remember, dear General, to get those letters for me."

"Yes, yes; I'll do that," said he. "Good-by, cousin Sybil; farewell, little one," said he, shaking hands with Sybil, and caressing the child.

"Never mind," thought the old gentleman, as he entered his carriage, "I'll let her alone awhile; and I'll bet before the month is out she'll be writing to me, revoking her decision."

The old man was gone, the fire had burnt out, and Sybil and her boy were left alone before the cold hearth. Sybil caught up the boy to her bosom and wept bitterly. Suddenly she thought of the preacher whom she had heard the preceding Sunday. The hopeful and comforting words of his discourse came back to her mind with a soothing influence. They did more; they inspired her with courage and energy.

"Yes," said she aloud, "that minister! why did I not think of him before? I *know* he is a good man, and he will advise me in what manner to set about procuring pupils. I will go to him at once."

THE PASTOR.

Mrs. Middleton arrived at the pastor's house, and was shown up into his study, and informed by the servant that Mr. Livingston would be with her in a few minutes. Sybil had changed very much since her first presentation to the reader. Though not yet twenty years old the rose of youth had faded from her pale cheek; yet her fair complexion, large, clear, blue, serene eyes, her sweet, serious lips, her gentle manner, and low sweet voice, and

her mourning dress, rendered her far more interesting than in her days of health and happiness. Sybil wanted self-possession, and she trembled slightly as she entered the pastor's study. The ten minutes, however, that elapsed before his entrance enabled her to regain composure.

Mr. Livingston, the pastor, now entered. He was a man of about forty years of age, tall, slender, with dark hair and eyes, and strikingly handsome, notwithstanding a pale complexion and hollow cheeks. Mrs. Middleton was re-assured by the kindly manner and gentle tones with which this Christian pastor greeted her.

"I hope you will pardon the liberty I take in calling upon you, Mr. Livingston. I am a stranger in this city, and I wish to open a small school, by which to support myself and child; and I have come to-day to solicit your assistance in my project, or at least your advice as to what steps it will be proper to take towards its accomplishment."

"You are a widow I presume, madam?" said the pastor, glancing at Mrs. Middleton's mourning dress.

"No, sir," murmured Sybil, a burning blush mounting to her brow.

The pastor looked at her in doubt; then said, 'You are probably able to produce good references?"

"Sir?"

"You are provided with testimonials of moral and intellectual fitness for the profession you wish to enter upon?"

"I have no such testimonials, sir, just now; but I hope to receive some in a few days from my native place."

"They are indispensable to your success, my dear madam, and I trust you will be able to procure them; if you do, I shall take pleasure in rendering all the assistance in my power towards the accomplishment of your object."

A quick flush passed over the pale cheek of Mrs. Middleton. She felt humiliated. She knew that she was suspected. She did *not* know that such was the case with every poor, needy, and friendless woman, especially if she be young, pretty, and a stranger. Sybil arose and took

leave. Her parting look of suffering resignation smote upon the heart of the minister. He stepped after her, and said gently, "Give me your name and address, madam. I will call and see what can be done in your case to-morrow."

Sybil now recollected, with confusion, that she had not given her name. She did as he requested, and went her way home re-assured, thinking, "I was not mistaken, after all, in Mr. Livingston; such a calm and holy smile, such a sweet, soothing voice, and then his general manner so gentle, though I saw he did not think justly of me: but my awkwardness and confusion impressed him unfavourably at first."

The next day the minister called. Sybil was in her chamber, putting her boy to sleep, so that the minister sat in her little parlour some ten minutes before she made her appearance. Mr. Livingston had been favourably impressed with Sybil; he was now confirmed in his good opinion by the appearance of her home. There is something about a dwelling, or the furniture of a dwelling, that will impress one favourably or otherwise with its occupant. Sybil's little parlour told her story. The furniture was a portion of that brought from Brotherton Hall, telling of decayed gentility. There was the rich old Turkey carpet, somewhat worn, that covered the floor; there were the crimson damask curtains, somewhat faded, that hung from the windows; there were the old-fashioned stuffed chairs—the large, unwieldy sofa—the heavy mahogany tables; and last, and most eloquent, were the fine old family portraits, all choice specimens of art, that hung upon the walls. There was a portrait of old Mrs. Brotherton, of Sybil's father and mother, and one of Sybil herself. One very characteristic thing I neglected to mention. It was three hanging shelves, containing Sybil's library of novels and romances. The observant eye of the pastor noted and drew conclusions from everything; but the portrait of Sybil, in her blooming, happy girlhood, arrested and fixed his attention. He was gazing upon it in deep thought when Mrs. Middleton came in.

"My dear Mrs. Middleton," said he, turning to meet her, "I must beg your confidence: you have told me that you are distressed—I see that you are reduced. I wish to devote my poor energies to your service; but, in order to serve you effectually, I would know more of your circumstances and expectations."

Sybil looked in his face. The noble frankness of the expression inspired her with confidence. She thanked him, and, with a flushed cheek and averted eye, she told her story. The minister listened with deep attention, and at the close of her narration he sought to direct her attention to the Great Source of strength and joy. Feeling her religious sympathies drawn out, Sybil related the emotion she had felt upon the receipt of her last letter, the whirlwind of anger that had shaken her soul, her subsequent alarm and repentance, and the peace and hope that had filled her bosom since. To this naïve confession the pastor listened with deep interest; for by that glimpse into the soul of Sybil he recognised a nature capable of the highest religious and intellectual culture, and one, therefore, likely to be refined in the seven times heated furnace of affliction. Moral philosophy was the pastor's favourite study; and men and women, with their trials and temptations, were the books he read upon the subject. The refined, the strong, the tempted, and struggling soul of Sybil Middleton attracted him forcibly; and he resolved to watch, to shield, and strengthen it in its contest. But of that more by and by. He did not for a moment lose sight of the immediate object of his visit—the temporal welfare of his intended *protégée*. He discovered Sybil's musical proficiency, and advised her to commence by instructing a few young ladies in that accomplishment, and volunteered to go among his parishioners and seek out pupils for her. Mrs. Middleton expressed her gratitude, and the pastor arose to take leave. His eye fell upon Sybil's book-shelves, filled with romances, and a slight smile curled his lip as he asked, "Is this your favourite reading, Mrs. Middleton?"

"In my days of ease and cheerfulness I used to delight in these books," answered Sybil; "but now ——"

"But now you require the most precious thoughts of the most holy writers to comfort and sustain you—books that you can feed upon. Shall I send you some such?"

"If you please, Mr. Livingston; I shall be very grateful. But, indeed, you are too kind to me—to me, who have no claim upon you, or any one else."

"Pardon me; you *have* a claim upon me, and a claim upon society; and the claim is mutual. Society demands of you that you cultivate all your natural gifts to the utmost, and use them for its benefit. You, then, have a right to demand of society happiness."

The minister took leave, and the same day went about among the members of his congregation to solicit pupils for his new *protégée*. The Rev. Stephen Livingston was more than popular among his parishioners; he had a rising name, and they were proud of him. Any enterprise, therefore, favoured by their pastor was very likely to be highly successful. Mr. Livingston's *protégée* was enthusiastically taken up and excessively patronised by his congregation. A class of fifteen pupils was soon made up for Mrs. Middleton. Many of them, at Mr. Livingston's instance, paid in advance; and in that way Sybil's immediate wants were relieved. From this time the light of hope sparkled again in the eyes of Sybil, the rose of health bloomed again on her cheeks. Her new profession introduced her among an intelligent and cultivated circle of acquaintances, some of whom, who were not too aristocratic to notice their children's teacher, eventually became warm friends. Mrs. Middleton became deeply yet healthfully interested in the progress of her pupils; and when her list of fifteen increased to thirty, nearly all her time in the day was taken up in attending upon them. The day would thus pass quickly and pleasantly away; for my heroine, reader, was of a cheerful and grateful temper, and did not call her daily occupation *toil*, nor her interest in it *anxiety*. Then, upon her return home in the evening, she would find a blazing fire, and tea prepared in her little parlour, and perhaps a new book, left by the pastor, awaiting her. When the weather would permit, little Hubert would be at the gate waiting, and

would totter forth to meet her. At such times the mother's heart would bound to meet her boy; and, catching him up in her arms, she would hurry into the house, and, sitting down, would strain him to her bosom, covering him with kisses the while. Katy, since she was no longer pinched with hunger or chilled with cold, was as blithe as a bird, and sung at her work all day long; while old Broom, who had run his visit into a permanent stay, employed himself in sawing and packing away wood for the winter's use; in clearing up the garden, which he meant to put under cultivation in the spring; and in attending to little Hubert.

THE PACKET.

One cold, damp evening, near the spring, Sybil returned home later than usual. It had been drizzling all day long, and towards evening the rain had fallen in torrents. Sybil had remained with the pupil whom she had last visited until near dark, hoping that the rain would cease. At last, borrowing an umbrella, she set out for home. How cheerful looked her little cottage, with the lights gleaming through its parlour windows! She entered the house, and, throwing aside her cloak and hood, looked around for little Hubert. Not seeing him she passed into her chamber, where he lay asleep; kissing him softly, and murmuring a blessing, she returned to the little parlour. Everything was comfortable there: the wood fire was blazing cheerfully, the tea-table was set, and Sybil's work-stand and basket placed in the corner, with her rocking-chair and footstool near it. Sybil sat down at her work-stand while Katy brought in tea.

"The parson been here, ma'am," said Katy; "waited for you a good while; just gone away; left this book for you in your work-basket."

Sybil took up the book, murmuring to herself, "'Paley.' Oh! Mr. Livingston is so kind! No one was ever so kind to me before, except my poor old grandmother. But what is this, Katy?" said she, taking up a packet directed, in a strange hand, to herself, and bearing a ship-stamp; "who left this?"

"That! Yes, ma'am, he brought that too, from the pos'-office for you."

Sybil tore off the envelope. It was a London paper. She unfolded it, and read with astonishment and grief the following notice, to which her attention was directed by a couple of pen-strokes:—

Died at his residence in Portman Square, on the 30th of October, Harold Preble Middleton, son of the Hon. Fenton Preble Middleton, and grandson of the Right Hon. the Earl of Mainwaring.

The paper dropped from her hands, and Sybil fell into thought. She did not reflect upon the man who had oppressed, deserted, slandered her—she thought only of the lover of her youth, the father of her child; and her tears began to flow faster than she could wipe them away.

"Well, I declare, Mrs. Middleton," said Katy, coming in, "you have not touched a mouthful of supper. I took such pains with them sponge-cakes, too; and the tea is best 'perial."

"You may take the table away, Katy," said Sybil; and, arising and passing into her chamber, she fell weeping upon the crib of her child.

GENERAL AND MRS. BROTHERTON.

To say that Sybil was the "inconsolable" widow of a man whom she had married upon a slight and insufficient acquaintance; who had remained with her comparatively but a short time; who had abused her even unto personal violence; who had forsaken her at her utmost need, aspersed her character, and disowned her child—to say this would be an incredible libel on her sanity. "Some natural tears she shed, but wiped them soon." She remained at home a fortnight, and occupied herself with making up her mourning, without thinking of the necessity of sending notes of explanation to her patrons, who were left by that omission to conjecture the cause of her protracted absence from her pupils. These conjectures at length reached the ears of the pastor, and he resolved to call and see Mrs. Middleton. He found Sybil calmly at work with her needle, while her little boy played upon

the carpet. No change in Sybil's looks warned him of what had occurred, so he said to her playfully, "My dear Mrs. Middleton, I have resolved myself into a committee of inquiry, to ascertain the cause or causes of your self-immolation."

In their lively moments Sybil had always answered his smiles with smiling, and his quibs with quiddities; but now her grave countenance seemed to rebuke his jesting. Requesting him to be seated, she arose from her chair, and, taking from her writing-desk the London paper, put it into his hands, and, pointing to the obituary notice, said, while the tears arose to her eyes, "The knowledge of that event has kept me at home for some time past. Will you please inform my patrons of it?"

Her large, tender eyes were raised to the pastor's face as she spoke; and she observed with surprise and displeasure the sudden, the involuntary flush of—*something* that lighted up the pastor's face as he read. Well, I own it; for my part, I *do* "expect perfection from human beings," at least from some of us, and especially from Christian ministers; and I feel humiliated to be obliged to acknowledge the existence of a single human weakness in Mr. Livingston; but so it was. The Rev. Stephen Livingston, the fervent Christian, the beloved pastor, the rising divine, had not lately, with his *whole soul*, worshipped one God, but in the temple of his heart *one niche* was occupied by an idol. Little did he suspect this, however, until, in perusing the paragraph, he discovered the real nature of his regard for Sybil, by the sudden recollection of the possibility of its gratification. Reproaching himself immediately and bitterly for this feeling, he returned the paper to Sybil, saying coldly, as he arose to take leave, "Mrs. Middleton, you may, and I hope will, command my services in this distressing affair whenever they may be required."

Sybil thanked him, and returned his cold "Good evening, madam," with a distant "Good night, sir."

"And now," thought the pastor, as he turned from the door, "I do not see that I have effaced one error of sinful exultation by another error of studied coldness. Poor child! at the very moment that she required consolation,

advice, and assistance, to leave her so abruptly without offering a single word of comfort. I must certainly see her again soon, and make amends for this."

Mrs. Middleton also indulged in a soliloquy to this effect:—"I am afraid, after all, that I have a very bad, or, at least, a very conceited mind. To think that I should be so vain as to suppose that Mr. Livingston was—that he felt—that the pastor thought——" Sybil durst not finish the sentence, even mentally, but, with a feeling of self-abasement, endeavoured to force her thoughts from the subject, after saying to herself, "Yes, yes; I have done the good pastor foul wrong by my vain suspicions. Well, well; I will be more reasonable when he comes again, if, indeed, he *ever* comes, after my cold ingratitude."

The next day the pastor called with more friendly offers of assistance, and his visit passed off in the easy manner of their first acquaintance. At his suggestion Sybil resolved to do many things, very necessary to be done, but which, with her limited knowledge of life, she would not else have thought of doing. For instance, the obituary notice was sent to some of the Baltimore papers; a letter was written to General Brotherton, informing him of her widowhood; and another letter was written to the Earl of Mainwaring, inquiring the particulars of Mr. Middleton's decease. Having assisted Sybil in all these matters, Mr. Livingston refrained from visiting her again. It was now, by missing it, that Sybil began to estimate the society of the pastor at its full value; she also divined the cause of his absence, though no word or glance had hinted it. Such is the mental freemasonry of affection.

A few weeks after this, when the spring had well opened, Sybil received a visit from General and Mrs. Brotherton. They had come to renew their generous proposal to Sybil, and, in the event of her rejecting it, to invite her to pass the first year of her widowhood at Brotherton Hall. In thinking of Mrs. General Brotherton, and in hearing her called by the General "the old lady," and "the old wife," and "my old lady," Sybil had pictured to herself a venerable woman, not unlike her departed grandmother. What was her surprise, then,

when the General introduced her to a handsome, fashionable-looking Frenchwoman, really forty-eight, but apparently about thirty-five years of age! Sybil had heard, it is true, that General Brotherton, during his service in the old French war, had been taken prisoner, and, during his captivity, had fallen in love with and married the daughter of a French officer; but she had lately forgotten it. General and Mrs. Brotherton remained in Baltimore a fortnight, and, during that time, the old proposition to Sybil was renewed. As there now existed no obstacle to its acceptance Sybil gratefully acceded to it, and began making active preparations for a removal to Brotherton Hall, the General superintending the packing up and off of the furniture, while madame busied herself among milliners and mantua-makers, compelling Sybil to go with her on all her excursions. Though no two people could be more opposite in temper than the lively Frenchwoman and the thoughtful Sybil, yet (for this very reason, perhaps) they were strongly attached to each other. Sybil had parted with all her pupils, and taken leave of all her friends, and so she felt and looked very serious as she entered the carriage with General and Mrs. Brotherton on the morning of her departure; so that madame said to her, "Come, *ma belle*, you put on a look of fortitude quite gratuitous under the circumstances; for really I cannot see that it requires so much moral courage to reconcile you to a black dress, when it becomes you so extremely well. If *I*, now, with my dark complexion, were compelled to make myself hideous in widow's weeds, it might be a matter of regret; but *you*—a fine girl like you—could not wear a more becoming colour; therefore leave that look of resignation, for I shall neither pity nor praise you on account of it."

Sybil raised her eyes to the face of Mrs. Brotherton in simple wonder.

"Ah, ah, *mignonne!*" exclaimed madame. "Your eyes are quite large enough and very beautiful just as they are. Do not try to stretch them any larger; for, *en vérité*, I think your look of wonder even less attractive than your look of martyrdom."

"She's not mad, cousin Sybil; at least, not raving mad, although you may fear it. I assure you there is no danger. Madame is a harmless lunatic," said the General seriously.

Sybil laughed in spite of herself. The object of her two relatives was effected. They had rallied her into cheerfulness. It was in May. It was late at night, and the full moon was shining brightly when they arrived at Brotherton Hall, and Sybil re-entered the home of her childhood.

SYBIL'S DREAM OF HAPPINESS.

A year had passed since the arrival of Mrs. Middleton and her child at Brotherton Hall—a year during which she had won the affection of her relatives, who esteemed her as a daughter—a year dotted with a few bright days, the occasions upon which her sometime pastor had blessed Brotherton Hall with his visits.

Her letter to the Earl of Mainwaring had not been answered; but then a voyage across the Atlantic, fifty years ago, was not the afternoon excursion that it is now; so that Sybil waited five or six months without anxiety. At the end of that time she had written again, and, to insure the safe delivery of her letter at its destination, she had inclosed it to the American Minister at the court of St. James's. She was now expecting an answer to this last letter. The spring of 1800 opened beautifully. The sunshine abroad was not more bright, warm, and genial than the sunshine of the breast enjoyed by Sybil Middleton. At no period of her short life had Sybil been so happy. By a judicious attention to the laws of physiology her early constitutional tendency to consumption had been conquered. By free exercise in the open air and frequent bathing she had attained high health; and, during the course of her acquaintance with Mr. Livingston, her intellectual faculties had become greatly unfolded; and now Sybil Middleton, in the full development and high enjoyment of mental, moral, and physical life, dreamed that she was about to attain the acme of human happiness; for one who had assisted her in difficulty, advised her in prosperity, sympathised with her in sorrow

—one who had developed and cultivated her intellect, enlarged and elevated her moral sense, enlightened and exalted her Christian faith—one whom she loved and worshipped next to God himself—had received her promise to become his wife. It was with the candour of pure affection that Sybil expressed the full joy she felt in giving him her hand. It is true that, for some months past, Sybil had expected this proposal; yet, now that it had been made, she could scarcely believe in the reality of her happiness. That Livingston, upon whose words she had hung with such deep joy—that he from whose instructions she had derived such strength and comfort—he upon whom she constantly depended for guidance—he whom she revered and honoured first upon earth, and whom she had lately grown to love with the whole strength of her earnest soul—that he should take her to his bosom, to pass her whole life with him, to bear his honoured name, to share his blessed labours—oh! this seemed a happiness too full for earth; and Sybil trembled amidst her joy as the day of their marriage drew near.

"In one short week, my own dear Sybil; in one short week we meet again, to part no more on earth! Oh, the joy, the joy to feel that this is our last brief separation! for I have grieved to leave you, even for a few days, my Sybil!" exclaimed Mr. Livingston, as he folded his betrothed bride to his bosom.

"Oh, yes! in one week more," murmured Sybil; "yet, ah! my own love, I grow superstitious, and tremble lest this joy be too full to last."

She raised her head from his bosom, and looked into his face; their eyes met in a long, full, earnest gaze. again he pressed her to his bosom in a silent embrace. Ah! if they could have died in that embrace! They parted.

THE AWAKENING.

Mr. Livingston, on his arrival at the parsonage late that night, found letters waiting for him. The first that arrested his attention bore a foreign mark; it was evidently from an acquaintance of his in London, and in

answer to a letter of inquiry written on the part of Mrs. Middleton. He took it up, opened the seal, and began to read. Did a basilisk blast his sight? Had he plucked up a mandrake to drive him mad? The paper fell from his cold hands; dashing his clenched fists against his burning brow, he groaned out, "My God! my God! This is too much for humanity to bear! Let me die now!"

He rushed out into the air, and up and down through the cool streets he walked, without calming the fever of his blood or cooling the fever in his brain—up and down through the silent streets, muttering half-smothered words of despair and grief—up and down through the dark streets with a strange light gleaming in his eyes, until morning dawned; then hurrying to his house, he shut himself up in his study, saying, "No, no; I must not see her in this state of mind! I must try to conquer this. Good God! shall I, who pretend to strengthen and console others, go mad or die myself?"

When the sun arose, and shone into the study of the pastor, its beams fell upon a face that seemed to have grown old in a night. He was sitting at a little table facing the window; his face was pale and haggard, his eyes hollow, his gaze strained upon a text in the open Bible before him, his thoughts concentrated upon a point—long he remained so. At length his head drooped upon the book—he prayed. It was the first time he had dared to pray since the opening of the fatal letter; he was strengthened—he became composed. Though all day long he remained in his study without refreshment, reading, praying, and meditating—though all night long he kept a vigil there—yet upon the following day, which was Sunday, he preached with his usual power and perspicacity. It is true that his congregation were shocked at his haggard countenance and shaking frame, and many of them made anxious inquiries concerning his health. Their pastor confessed that he was not well, and finally succeeded in escaping from his officious friends, and regaining the privacy of his home. Early on Monday morning the pastor arose, and, having saddled his horse himself, mounted, and took his way towards Brotherton

Hall. He was again changed. Not a vestige of emotion was visible in his face or manner. His countenance was sorrowful, but calm, resolute, and still; his manner gentle and serious, yet determined.

That day Sybil was sitting alone at work, singing in the overflowing joy of her heart. The little boy was trundling a hoop in the yard, and ever and anon his merry laugh and shout came in at the open windows. General and Mrs. Brotherton were out taking a ride. Presently there was a sound of a horse's feet in the yard, a familiar footstep in the hall, a hand upon the lock, and Mr. Livingston stood before Sybil. His face was pale, and wore the impress of desperate sorrow, yet inflexible resolution.

Sybil had sprung to meet him, yet stood transfixed by his looks.

"Good heavens, dearest! what is the matter? Has anything happened?" exclaimed she.

"Sit down, Sybil," said he gravely, at the same time taking a seat himself.

"Yes—I will; but, oh! indeed something *has* happened—I see it by your looks. Dear love, what *can* it be?" exclaimed Sybil anxiously.

"Yes, Sybil, something *has* happened; something to change the whole current of our future lives. You are growing pale, Sybil; summon all your Christian fortitude, or, if your strength fail, call on Him who giveth freely. I have received a letter from my London correspondent on the subject upon which I wrote to him six months ago. You remember ——"

"Yes, yes! Well?"

"Well, Sybil—my poor Sybil—we have been labouring under a fatal mistake; your husband is living!" Sybil fell back in her chair deadly pale and faint. Mr. Livingston poured out and handed her a glass of water, which, when she had drunk, she murmured, "It is over—it is over—that happy dream!"

Deceived by her quietness, the pastor went on to say, "This was the way in which the mistake originated, Mrs. Middleton."

"You need not tell me! It is of no use! We do not

care to know how the poison was distilled that has sapped our lives! We do not inquire where the dagger was wrought that is sheathed in our hearts!"

"Sybil! Sybil! O Heaven, support her! Her hands are icy cold—her breath comes thick and short. Sybil—O my poor Sybil, bear up under this; be resigned to the will of Heaven."

"Commonplace! commonplace! You'd say the same to a mother whose only child was about to be hung! Be resigned! Bear up! And have I *not* borne up? Have I *not* been resigned? *I*, that have suffered as no one ever suffered before me! *I*, that have been tried as no one ever was tried before me! Resignation! fortitude! What have they done for me but to provoke upon my head a reiteration of trial, as if Heaven were making the experiment of how much sorrow a human being could bear without going mad!"

"Now, may Heaven forgive your wild words, Sybil! O Sybil! suffer me to pray with you as in days past!"

"Pray!" exclaimed she bitterly, "to whom, and for what? *Pray!* I've prayed all my life; and here I sit, a tortured, a blighted, a miserable woman! I would I were annihilated!"

"O Sybil! if this were the only life, still you would have no excuse for such a frantic arraignment of Providence. But, oh! bethink you, this dark, this thorny, this sorrowful road, if we tread it firmly and patiently, will lead us to ——"

"Another and a happier world, perhaps. I know nothing of it! I do not hear it! I do not see it! Away with it! I will none of it. Give me—oh, give me happiness in *this* world, that I know!" And Sybil, extending her arms pleadingly towards her lover, burst into tears. Struggling with a powerful emotion, the pastor turned abruptly, and walked to a window at the opposite end of the room, where he remained a long time, apparently gazing out upon the landscape.

Laughing, jesting, and joyous, General Brotherton and his wife now entered the room from their drive. Sybil slipped out, and fled to her chamber to conceal her emotion, while the pastor turned tranquilly to meet them.

Very early on the next morning Mr. Livingston de-

scended to the parlour. He was to leave Brotherton Hall after the family breakfast—to leave it with the probability of never returning; yet he resolved, before going, to put in execution a plan which he had matured during the night. He had been very much shaken by the despair of Sybil. He knew her disposition better than she knew herself. He knew that there could be no risk in the plan he resolved to propose, in order to rouse all the energy of her soul to throw off the weight of her sorrow. Through all this seeming stoicism, the pastor ever felt the wound that was festering in his own heart. The pastor had not been down many minutes before Sybil entered. She was very, very pale, gentle, and subdued. Sinking, trembling, in a chair, she said in a low sad voice, "Give me the letter now, my friend; I can read it now."

The pastor placed it in her hands. She read as follows:—

"My dear Friend,—I have made inquiries concerning the person of whom you wrote me. The obituary notice in the London paper referred to the Honourable Harold Preble Middleton, the grandson of the Earl of Mainwaring, a gentleman who has never left England, and who, besides, has left a widow and children in Portman Square. I have since learned that there is a relative of the family, bearing the same name, who spent three years in America. This person is represented to be a sort of genteel loafer, or aristocratic vagabond, who spends his time in 'going to and fro on the earth, and passing up and down in it;' a sort of amateur artist, and is now at Rome, studying the old master-pieces of painting. With him is an Italian woman, who passes for his wife—one Inez or Inze di Silva."

The letter was long, but it here left the subject of so much interest to Sybil; so, folding it up slowly and calmly, she returned it to Livingston. Sybil was composed, but it was the composure of despair, the quiet of weakness; the feebleness of nature was upon her. Her heart seemed melting, dying in her bosom; and indeed she thought, and welcomed the thought, that this weakness was unto death. The pastor saw this, and felt the urgent necessity of rousing her.

'I am much relieved to see you have regained composure, dear Sybil."

"Yes, I have regained composure," said she, sighing. "But, oh, my dear friend, I have lost your good opinion! I know it—I feel it; through the ravings of my despair I have lost your esteem for ever."

"No, dear Sybil, my esteem for you remains undiminished. I never supposed you to be an angel, and I am not surprised to find you a woman."

"But you were so firm, so self-possessed, so calm."

"Yes, Sybil, after two nights of moral tempest; and my calmness was perhaps as much the effect of exhausted nature as of reason or religion. We have both sinned, Sybil, not *hitherto* in our attachment—for that was involuntary, inevitable—but in the terrible arraignment of Providence of which we have both been guilty."

"Yes, yes! Oh, I feel that!" said Sybil. "It is well for us, indeed, that our Father in heaven is so long-suffering and patient with us. Listen, my friend; when I fled to my chamber last evening I was mad. The very elements of my being were broken up—all was storm, confusion, chaos; and this storm raged through my soul until it exhausted my strength. I felt as though the very earth had rolled from beneath my feet, and I had forfeited my claim upon heaven. Eternal night seemed to have fallen upon my soul; I was desolate, forsaken, *cursed!* I was mad! I was tempted! The thought of self-destruction flashed into my mind, and I said, I will leave life, I will fly to death; and with the sophistry of passion I added, I shall not be as a rebellious subject rushing unbidden into the presence of his king—no, no; but as a tempest-driven child flying for refuge to the bosom of her Father. I started up, my grasp was upon the lock of the door, when a gentle hand, a weak infant's hand, held me back. I turned, and little Hubert was standing by me, looking with wonder and grief upon me—while he murmured, 'I love you, mamma!' O my friend, can you understand the revulsion of feeling that overpowered me? I sank down where I was, and, folding the babe to my bosom, I wept; and, as my emotion subsided, I be-

came penetrated with a sense of my ingratitude and sin, and I prayed; but, oh, my friend, *before* I prayed, simultaneously with the first dawning of penitence came a sense of forgiveness. God meets us more than half way with pardon; he does not wait for the bended knee; he does not stay for the forming prayer; he meets the first impulse of penitence with forgiveness. I do not pretend to account for the existence of suffering, I do not clearly comprehend the use of trial, but I know that God is good; I feel that God is love; I believe that we are not tortured in vain. But I am an egotist—I have talked too long; yet you have been in some sort my father confessor, Livingston," added she, with a sorrowful attempt to smile. The short-lived animation that had borne her through this speech was fast dying away.

"No, dear Sybil, you have given me comfort," replied the pastor.

He still called her "dear Sybil," for he could not bring himself to address the failing, fainting woman before him in any but the language of tenderness. She had relapsed into a fearful apathy—her form was still as death—her face was ashy pale even to her lips—the very torpor of despair seemed to have stupefied her—the very elements of existence seemed resolving into dissolution. The pastor saw this with alarm, and hastened to arouse her attention by the proposal of his plan.

"Listen to me, dear Sybil! there is hope for us yet

"Hope!" echoed Sybil unconsciously.

"Yes, hope. Attend to me, dear Sybil, if you please. You remember the proposition made to you by General Brotherton about two years ago—you remember, Sybil?"

"Yes," said Sybil absently.

"When General Brotherton is informed of the contents of this letter that proposition will be renewed. Do you not think so?"

"Possibly," replied Sybil indifferently.

"Probably—nay, certainly. What if you were to accept the conditions, and free yourself?"

Starting, half raising herself, bending forward, while the light brightened in her eyes and the colour warmed

in her cheek, she exclaimed, "Mr. Livingston, my friend, do *you* advise me to this?"

"Nay, Sybil—I advise you to nothing. This is a matter, above all others, upon which you must not take advice; but I *do* say to you that it is worth investigation; and I promise that if, after you shall have examined the subject by the light of the Holy Scriptures, with the aid of sincere prayer, you may religiously as well as legally free yourself, and enter a second engagement, I will then entreat you to bless me with your hand."

"But," said Sybil, reviving, "even if our own consciences were satisfied, such a marriage might impair your usefulness."

"It might secure our happiness."

"No! as Heaven hears me," exclaimed Sybil warmly, "I would not purchase happiness, *even for you*, at the price of the faintest shadow upon your Christian character!"

"Dismiss that from your mind, Sybil. Let us strive to understand the will of God. Let us strive to do that which is right in the sight of God, and leave the consequences with Him."

"Then tell me what is right, my own dear guide and mentor. I do not wish to go beyond you for direction in this difficulty. I am sure you know what is right, for you have seemed to stand between my God and myself, interpreting his will to me."

"No, Sybil, my gentle one, this is between God and your own conscience; it would be sacrilege to interfere. You must 'tread the wine-press alone,' looking to Him for fortitude, who entered it *alone* before you."

"Alas, alas! and I have no father or mother to advise with me—no brother or sister to comfort me—no friend, when you are gone, to sympathise with me."

"Dear Sybil, you are of all persons the best fitted to judge of your own case by the light of religion; no one knows the circumstances as you know them."

"I am very well aware that it is considered extremely ill-natured to intrude upon lovers; but when they choose the family breakfast-room, early in the morning, for their

tête-à-tête, and less happy folks are hungry, how can it be avoided?" exclaimed the jovial old General, as he bustled into the room.

How his merriment jarred upon the excited nerves of Sybil!

"When I was wooing we used to take woodland walks on such fine spring mornings as this. Ask madame—here she comes. I 'm telling these transported people, Gabrielle, when you and I were transcendentalated, we did not stay about the house, putting sensible people to inconvenience by taking possession of their breakfast-room, keeping them from their chocolate. No; when *we* were etherealised, and left eating and drinking to people that were 'of the earth earthy,' we rehearsed our dreams and visions 'amid the vasty solitudes of nature,' as cousin Sybil's books call mountains and forests. Come, old lady," added he, patting his wife affectionately on the shoulder, "make them stir about—stir about. As I have been shooting at waterfowl, and not at hearts, this morning, I am smitten with a rather exacting affection for coffee and toast."

The General had lately affected to call his wife "old lady"—a *sobriquet* which the pretty Frenchwoman never failed to receive with a toss of the head, at once haughty, petulant, and graceful, which shook down her ringlets in the most becoming fall.

Breakfast was served, and immediately after it was removed the pastor arose to take leave. He shook hands with Mrs. Brotherton, with the General, and approached Sybil with a sinking, dying heart—with a reeling brain. Well he knew that this was the last, last time he should ever behold her. Truly he felt that he should never, *never* again see her face, hear her voice, touch her hand—the woman towards whom his whole being tended with a force, by an attraction, almost impossible to be checked. His heart sank, his brain reeled, his voice quivered, yet his words were cold.

"Mrs. Middleton, farewell."

"Good-by," said Sybil, as her cold hand fell heavily from his grasp.

That cold, conventional leave-taking, amid the merry

group! and with their bursting hearts! Well, perhaps it was better.

"'Mrs. Middleton!' Well, I call Venus, Cupid, and Psyche, and all the Muses and Graces to witness that I never called the old lady by any name than 'Flower,' 'Star,' 'Pearl,' 'Angel,' 'Seraph,' or 'Gabrielle,' that meant each and all, from the moment of our engagement until some three or four weeks after marriage!"

Livingston was gone.

"Why, cousin Sybil, what do you intend to do with such an icicle as that? Decidedly that man has mistaken his vocation. He was intended for a monk. Sybil! heavens! what is the matter? Wife, come here; she 's ill—she 's got an inflammation on the brain—her hands are cold as ice, her head as hot as fire, her eyes are wild Sybil, speak to your old cousin; how do you feel?"

"What is Good? What is Evil? Where is God?" asked Sybil wildly.

"Oh! my good gracious! she 's mad, raving mad! Old lady, I say! All owing to that strong coffee—destroyed her nervous system. All owing to coffee and novels—drinking strong coffee and eating—I mean *reading*—novels, I know."

"You know nothing about it. Leave the room, General—you 're like a bear nursing a baby," said Mrs. Brotherton coming in.

"Yes; but, Gabe—I mean old lady," amended the General spitefully—"she 's very ill, I tell you."

"She is not. It is a rush of blood to the brain—nothing more. Leave her to me."

The General left the room, grumbling, "She 's my cousin, Gabrielle, not yours."

Madame looked after him with a fond, quizzing smile. She understood the pathology and treatment of overwrought passion as well as a Parisian doctor. Delicately refraining from expressing any surprise or asking any questions, she applied the necessary remedies, and soon restored her patient to composure.

Livingston had succeeded, by an almost superhuman exertion of will, in subduing all outward demonstrations

of emotion while in the presence of Sybil. Leaving Brotherton Hall, he spurred his horse into a furious gallop, as though he would ride away from himself, or win the race of sorrow; and rustics, who saw him shoot past like an arrow, surmised that he carried an express. Then, again, he would permit his horse to fall into a slow walk, as though he were pursuing a journey without object or aim; and those who knew his person might have conjectured that he was meditating his next Sabbath's discourse. He was tempted; for he knew that it was with himself—*himself*—that this question rested at last. He knew that the woman whose mind he had developed, whose heart was all his own, over whom he possessed unbounded influence, who never questioned his rectitude of principle, who seldom exerted her own moral agency if *he* were at hand to decide for her—he felt that this woman could not fail to be won by his arguments to any course he should point out to her; and he felt that he was responsible not only for his own moral welfare, but for hers also. And he loved her moral welfare; above all things, he loved that; and he regretted the feminine softness of character that, while it made her so sweetly attractive, left her so much at his disposal; and he wished that corrected, and he knew that this trial would effect its cure, by calling out all the latent energies of her really strong soul, by arousing the sleeping strength of her pure moral sense; and he had no fears for the result. He knew the features of her mind, as a mother knows the face of her child; he knew that she would suffer, struggle, but overcome; and he knew that her soul would come out from this struggle pure as gold from the furnace, strong as steel from the tempering, healthful as a young giant from the wrestle. But then to lose her—to lose her! Oh! those three words expressed for him the very alpha and omega, the all of mortal agony; and, at the thought, he would feel exasperated to spurn away all his earthly usefulness and interests, to forego all his heavenly hopes and aspirations to possess her—and *would* have done so, but for the right-directed will, the calm, the inflexible, the unchanged, the immutable will—the regal will—that sat

restraining, directing, governing, subduing this revolt of the passions, like an upright judge amid an excited populace.

The pastor reached home, and commenced preparations to remove to the South. And thus it is, whenever two people are disappointed in love, the man goes away somewhere, flies to the North or the South Pole, or makes a balloon voyage to spend a winter in the moon, and speedily effaces old impressions by new ones; while the woman, poor thing! is left to brood over her disappointment amid the very ruins of her tumbled-down castle from the air, surrounded by all the associations of her past joy—taking the same walks, and missing *one* from her side—sitting in the same parlour, at the same hour, logically looking for the same form, listening for the same voice, "waiting for the steps that come not back." Decidedly she would break her heart, but that some old aunty reminds her that men are not worth breaking hearts for; and, besides, broken hearts have gone out of fashion, and women don't like to be unfashionable.

THE STRUGGLE

But Sybil, poor Sybil, with her strong affections, her fervent aspirations after right, her feebleness of will, her nervous temperament, and her terrible trial!

When General Brotherton had read the letter that had been silently placed in his hands by Livingston at leaving, the old gentleman's rage exploded and scattered consternation throughout his household. You would have supposed, to have heard him, that he considered the continued existence of Middleton as the very climax of his crimes. If ever he dared to set foot in America he would hang him up with his own hands, as he would a thieving cur. He wouldn't wait for that. He'd go to Rome, old as he was, *that* he would, and shoot the fellow like a mad dog! And the old gentleman drove the dogs from the room, kicked the cat, scolded the servants, and frightened the child, by way of convincing people that he meant what he said.

After a few days, having reconsidered the subject of setting Providence right in this matter of life and death, General Brotherton renewed his former proposition, and pressed Sybil to its adoption, using all the arguments that his clear, logical, worldly view of the affair could suggest. Sybil, whom the surges of emotion that had swept over her had left quiet and weak, replied that she would *think* of it.

"She will 'think of it.' Gabrielle, do you hear? She 'will think of it;' that's a great point gained. It's easy to perceive that her desire for the crown of martyrdom is considerably diminished. I should judge the parson had set her right upon some points of Christian doctrine."

And Sybil did think of it until her brain reeled and her reason tottered. She did not examine the moral and legal authorities upon the subject, for she did not possess a logical mind, and she said, properly enough, "They will only confuse my mind with their arguments and counter-arguments, for half the time they are more desirous to conquer in controversy than to find truth; but I will go to the fount of light and truth—I will go to the Bible;" and she went to the Bible, and she searched with care, with eagerness, with breathless avidity, with an earnest desire to find that which she sought—Christian permission to free herself; and she found that there is but one cause for which a man may divorce his wife, and no cause, *none*, for which a woman may divorce her husband and marry again. There is something in Bible truth that heals while it probes, that strengthens while it chastises. He who laid down this seemingly partial law understood the hearts of women, and knew the comparatively spiritual nature of their affections. He who delivered this stringent command was himself steeped to the lips in suffering, was himself "tempted in all things *as we are*." Never before had Sybil so sympathised (thus to speak) with the Saviour's sufferings, never had she *so* realised the Saviour's temptations, never had she so received the great lesson of the Saviour's life and death as now, when, "searching the Scriptures" in sorrow and temptation, and in the tenderness of her melted heart, she breathed forth, "Not all thy promises, O Saviour! affect me so much

as thy example and thy sufferings. I will bear my cross: even so, Sufferer and Saviour, for it was thy way."

All emotion, even religious emotion, is short-lived, and not to be trusted. The only permanent safety is in a clear conception of duty, and a resolute determination to act up to it, looking to God for strength. So true is this that, through all their teaching, the Saviour and his apostles seldom or never appeal to passion or imagination —generally to reason.

Sybil's religious enthusiasm subsided, and then came the temptation in its might—the temptation of a lifetime, the trial of principle, the test of faith, the crisis of character—the point upon which all that could blind to right, all that could tempt to evil, were brought to a focus. To every one who has passed unsullied through the lesser temptations of this world, to every one upon whom the common trials of life have had little influence, to every one who has attained a certain moral point of elevation, there comes once in life one trial of pre-eminent strength, one temptation of almost irresistible might, one test of infallible truth—a temptation, through the most powerful passion of the soul, of the weakest point in the character. This touchstone may be applied in youth, in mid-life, or in age; and the result is almost invariably final, giving the bent to character for time and for eternity. To one whose besetting sin is avarice, this test may come in the shape of some rare chance to secure a great pecuniary profit, at the cost of a slight departure from rectitude; and it may come in a time of great penury and severe privation, and it may offer affluence at the price of integrity. How severe his struggle then! Will he stop to inquire, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" To one of a higher grade, for whom wealth has but little attraction, but to whom the applause of men is as the breath of life, it may come, this touchstone, in the form of some golden opportunity of securing popular favour by a slight deviation from the straight line of duty, as when some great statesman, whose popularity is fluctuating, is tempted of his ambition to engage in some popular but unholy cause; it

may come when his favour with men is at the lowest ebb, and it may place within his reach the very prize of his life-long hopes, the very goal of his life-long aspirations, requiring of him only to overleap some obstacle of duty to reach it, to let fall some principle of justice to grasp it. Will he, the tempted, then feel that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" and will he remember that the most unpopular man on earth, during his life, was "Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified?"

And to those for whom neither the applause of nations nor the wealth of the Indies has attraction sufficient to draw from duty, but who are gifted with ardent affections, and whose dearest and most importunate sin is to bestow love and worship, due only to the Creator, upon the creature—to them comes an opportunity of satisfying to the full the strong and craving affections, at a sacrifice of principle seemingly so trifling as not to subject them to the strictures of the most moral community, or exclude them from the communion of the most puritanical Christian church, but which the microscopic eye of a faithful conscience will detect and expose. Will the tempted then remember that, if duty demand it, the right hand must be cut off, the right eye plucked out, Isaac offered up?

In all her former sorrows Sybil Middleton had been simply a passive sufferer, bearing meekly the troubles which she could not avert, but exercising no moral agency, practising no self-denial, achieving no victory. True, the mild virtues of patience and resignation had been brought out, but these were natural to Sybil hitherto; she could not have been otherwise than resigned and patient under suffering. But now there came a far greater trial—a duty demanding not self-immolation only—oh, no! that would have been comparatively a light grief, a slight test—but the sacrifice of one dearer than self, the casting out of the object of the heart's fondest affections, the hurling down of the idol of the soul's highest worship. The struggle was long and fierce; nights of watching, days of tears, weeks of sorrow passed before Sybil could turn a deaf ear to the solicita-

tions of affection and of interest, and resolve to be true to her present conceptions of duty. At last she took a pen, and wrote to Mr. Livingston as follows:—

"MR. LIVINGSTON,—I have decided. We must meet no more. We must write no more. Let an ocean of silence and distance freeze up between us. Let us die to each other. "SYBIL."

Not until this letter was sealed and sent did Sybil realise that all indeed was over. She threw herself upon the lounge; she buried her head in the pillows, as if to shut out all sight and sound, writhing and quivering as though in the extremity of mortal anguish; then, starting from her couch, and tossing her wild hair from her face, she walked the floor with nervous and irregular steps, wringing and twisting her pale fingers together; and when this passion had exhausted its victim she lay in the apathy of despair, content with the silence, darkness, and repose of her chamber, dreading light, sound, or disturbance, scarcely wishing for a change, though that change might bring happiness. Alas for the reward of an approving conscience! alas for the triumph of a victory over temptation! alas for the support of conscious rectitude! She felt none of these consolations now —none. It is not in the first moments of such a victory, the soul exhausted with its struggles and prostrate with its sufferings, that such comfort can be received. It is not at the instant that the right hand is cut off, that the right eye is plucked out, and the wounds are still smarting and bleeding, that one feels it to be "better" so. It is not at the moment in which the most cherished object of the affections, which has become entwined with every fibre of the heart, is first torn away, and the severed tendons are lacerated and bleeding, that they can clasp any support, or repose on any pillow. The time of strength and joy does come—and it comes in beauty, in glory, and in permanency; but it dawns gradually as the morning after the night of storms and darkness. Sybil gradually obtained composure, by degrees became interested in her daily avocations, and eventually grew happy, real-

ising that happiness does not consist in the accomplishment of our dearest wishes, but in the cultivation and exercise of our virtues.

I have dwelt too long upon the trials of Sybil—trials which were all comprised in the passage of a few years, which were acutely felt only for a few weeks. She had received the attacks of some severe troubles, and sustained the shock of one terrible disappointment; yet, now that she has survived the snows of seventy winters, now that her form is bowed, and her hair is white with age and not with grief, you might look upon that calm face, and believe that grief had never convulsed it; upon that clear brow, and believe that care had never clouded it; into that serene eye, and think that tears had never dimmed it. And more, you may hear it often observed that "Mrs. Middleton has a very young-looking face for her age;" and the reply, "Yes, very; but then she has never had any trouble to make her look old;" and that is all *they* know about it, reader!

And the pastor! Livingston obtained a pastoral charge in the South. He became eminent as a theologian, a philanthropist, and a moral philosopher; yet people said that in his private life he was a cold, severe ascetic, proof against all tender impressions—a very woman-hater; and that was all *they* knew about it, reader!

Verily, "the true greatness of human life is almost altogether out of sight."

THE WIDOW AND HER SON.

"Long years shall see thee roaming
A sad and weary way,
Like traveller tired at gloaming
Of a sultry summer day.
But soon a home will greet thee,
Though low its portals be,
And ready kinsmen meet thee,
And peace that will not flee."—PERCIVAL.

It was a lovely morning in July, and the sun had not yet risen, when our family party, consisting of Aunt and Uncle Clive, Cousin Christine, and myself, took seats at an early breakfast-table. A capacious carriage, well packed with presents for country cousins, stood at the door, ready to convey us to Virginia, to spend the month of August. We, a merry set, were too delighted with our prospective pleasure to eat anything; and so we left the table, and put on our bonnets and hats, preparatory to a start. We entered the carriage.

"Now, then, are we all ready?" asked Uncle Clive.

"Yes," replied aunt.

"Has nothing been forgotten?"

"No; but stay! Where is Cousin Peggy's cap, Chrissy?"

"There—pinned up in that paper to the roof of the carriage. Don't hit your head against it, uncle."

"Clive, where did you put the basket of bread and butter, and cold chicken?"

"There—in the bottom of the carriage. Be careful now, my dear, or you will get your feet into it."

"No, I sha'n't! But hadn't you better put the band-box, with Martha's bonnet, inside here?"

"Indeed, mother," interposed Miss Chrissy, "there is no room for it; for Cousin Peggy's bundle is on one side, and the keg of crackers on the other; my feet are resting on the caddy of tea, and the loaf of sugar and paper of coffee are in my lap."

"There, let 's get along!" said Uncle Clive impatiently. "I declare the sun is already half an hour high, and a ride of forty-five or fifty miles before us. We shall not reach Willow Glade before ten o'clock to-night."

"Yes, and about nine o'clock we shall be going down Bloody Run Hill; and I never can go through the piece of woods between that and Gibbet Hill, after dark, without horror."

"Ever since the pedlar was murdered?"

"Yes, ever since the pedlar was murdered, and before too."

Uncle Clive now jumped into his seat, and, taking the reins, we set off at a pretty brisk rate.

"Clive, don't that horse look a little vicious? See how he pricks up his ears!"

"Pooh! Nonsense! He 's as safe a horse as ever drew."

"What o'clock is it now?"

"Humph! Half-past five. I think the next time we wish to get off at sunrise we had better arrange to start at midnight; then, perhaps, we may succeed."

Turning the corner of the road at this moment, the sudden sight of the river, and the wood on the opposite bank, glimmering and glistening in the light of the morning sun, elicited a simultaneous burst of admiration from our travellers. Then the prospective pleasures of the rural visit were discussed, the family and friendly reunions, the dinner-parties, the fish-feasts upon the river's banks, the oyster-excursions and crab-expeditions; and in such pleasant anticipations the cheerful hours of that delightful forenoon slipped away; and when, at last, the heat of the sun grew oppressive, and our sharpened appetites reminded us of the dinner-basket, we began to look around for a cool, dry, and shady spot, on which to rest and refresh ourselves. The road here was wide, and passed through a thick forest. A few more turns of

the wheels brought us to a narrow footpath, diverging from the main road into the forest, on the left-hand side.

"Let's get out here, Clive, and follow this path; I know it. It leads to a fine spring, with an acre or two of cleared land about it, on which there was once a dwelling."

This was agreed upon; and we all alighted, and took the path through the wood. We had not gone many yards ere a scene of woodland beauty opened to our view. It presented an area of about four acres of open land in the midst of the forest. From the opposite side a little rivulet took its rise, and ran tinkling and splashing, in its pebbly bed, through the centre of this open glade, until its music was lost in the distance in the forest. But the most interesting object in sight was a ruined cottage. It was very small. It could not have contained more than two rooms. In front there had once been a door, with a window on each side, but now both door and windows were gone.

The solitary chimney had fallen down, and the stones of which it had been built lay scattered around. A peach tree grew at the side of the cottage; and its branches, heavy with the luscious fruit, drooped upon the low roof. A grape vine grew in front, and its graceful tendrils twined in and out through the sashless windows and the broken door. A bird of prey was perched upon the house; and as we approached, with a fearful scream it took its flight.

"Be careful, Christine, where you step; your foot is on a grave!"

With a start, and a sudden pallor, Christine looked down upon the fragment of a grave-stone. Stooping, and putting aside the long grass and weeds, she read, "The only child of his mother, and she a widow."

"Whose grave could this have been, mother? The upper part of the stone, which should bear the name, is gone. Oh, how sad this ruined cot and this lonely grave! I suppose, mother, here, in the heart of a forest, in this small cottage, lived the widow and her only child. The

child died, as we may see; and she—oh, was the boon of death granted to her at the same moment? But who are they, mother? As your early life was passed in this part of the country, you surely can tell us."

Aunt Clive, who had been gazing sadly and silently on the scene since giving the warning to Christine, said, "Yes, I can tell you the story. But here comes your father, looking very tired and hungry; and, as it is a very sad tale, we will defer it until we have dined."

We spread our repast upon the grass, and, seating ourselves upon the fragments of the broken chimney, soon became engrossed in the discussion of cold chicken, ham, and bread. As soon as we had despatched them, and repacked our basket, and while we were waiting for the horses to feed and rest, Aunt Clive told us the following tale.

THE IRISH EMIGRANTS.

A short time previously to the breaking out of the Rebellion in Ireland, a family of distinction came from that country to America, and purchased and settled upon a handsome estate near the then flourishing village of Richmond. Their family name was Delany. With them came Dr. Dulan, a clergyman of the Established Church. Through the influence of the Delanys, Dr. Dulan was preferred to the rectorship of the newly established parish of All Saints, and subsequently to the president's chair of the new collegiate school of Newton Hall. This prosperity enabled him to send for his son and daughter, and settle with them in a comfortable home near the scene of his labours.

It was about the fifth year of his residence in Virginia that the Rebellion in Ireland broke out, and foremost among the patriots was young Robert Dulan, a brother of the doctor. All know how that desperate and fatal effort terminated. Soon after the martyrdom of the noble Emmett young Dulan was arrested, tried, condemned, and followed his admired leader to the scaffold, leaving his heart-broken young wife and infant boy in extreme

penury and destitution. As soon as she recovered from the first stunning shock of her bereavement she wrote to her brother-in-law, soliciting protection for herself and child. To this the doctor, who to great austerity of manners united an excellent heart, replied by inviting his brother's widow to come to Virginia, and inclosing the amount of money required to supply the means. As soon as the old gentleman had done that, he began to prepare for her reception. Knowing that two families seldom get on well beneath the same roof, and with a delicate consideration for the peculiar nature of her trials, he wished to give her a home of her own. Selecting this spot, for the beauty and seclusion of its position, as well as for its proximity to his own residence, he built this cottage, inclosed it by a neat paling, and planted fruit trees. It was a very cheerful, pretty place, this neat, new cottage, painted white, with green window-shutters; the white curtains; the honeysuckle and white jessamine, trained to grow over and shade the windows; the white paling, tipped with green; the clean gravel walk that led up to the door, the borders of which were skirted with white and red roses; the cluster of tulips, lilies, and hyacinths—all contributed to make the wilderness "blossom as the rose;" and every day the kind-hearted man sought to add some new attraction to the scene.

One evening the doctor had been over to the cottage, superintending the arrangement of some furniture. On his return home a servant brought a packet of letters and papers. Glancing over one of them, he said, "Elizabeth, my daughter!"

A prim young lady, in a high-necked dress, and a close-fitting black net cap, looked up from her work, and answered in a low formal voice, "My father."

"Your aunt and cousin have at length arrived at the port of Baltimore. They came over in the Walter Raleigh. I wish you to be in readiness to accompany me to-morrow, when I go to bring them down."

"My father, yes," were the only words that escaped the formal and frozen girl.

A week after this conversation the still life of the

beautiful cottage was enlivened. A lovely boy played before the door, while a pale mother watched him from within. That pale mother was not yet thirty years of age, yet her cheeks were sunken, her eyes dim, and her hair streaked with silver. Truly the face was breaking fast, but the heart was breaking faster. But the boy! Oh, he was a noble child! Tall for his age (he was but five years old), his dark hair, parted over a high, broad forehead, fell in sable curls upon his shoulders; his large black eyes now keen and piercing as the young eagle's, now soft and melting as the dove's. His dark eyes wore their softest shade as he stole to his mother's side, and, twining his little arms around her neck, drew her face down to his, saying, with a kiss, "Willie is so sorry!"

"For what should Willy be sorry?" said the mother tenderly caressing him.

"Because mamma is sad. Does she want Willie to do anything?"

"No, sweet boy; she wants nothing done that Willie can do."

"If mamma's head aches Willie will hold it."

"Her head does not ache."

"If mamma wants Willie to stop teasing her and go to bed, he will go."

"You are not teasing me, dear Willie, and it is rather too early for you to go to bed."

The widow strove to chase the gloom from her brow, that she might not darken by its shadow the bright sunshine of her child's early life, and, with an effort at cheerfulness, she exclaimed, "Now go, Willie, and get the pretty book Cousin Elizabeth gave you, and see if you can read the stories in it."

Willie ran off to obey with cheerful alacrity.

The doctor was not able to do more for his sister-in-law than to give her the cottage, and supply her with the necessaries of life; and to do this he cheerfully curtailed the expenses of his own household. It was delightful to see the affectionate gratitude of the widow and child towards their benefactor. And that angel child! I wish I could do justice to his filial devotion. He seemed,

at that early age, to feel as though he only lived to love and bless his mother. To be constantly at her side, to wait upon her, even to study her wants and anticipate her wishes, seemed to be the greatest joy of the little creature.

"Willie, why don't you eat your cake?" asked his uncle one day, when Willie had been sent over to the doctor's on an errand, and had been treated to a large slice of plum cake by his cousin Elizabeth.

Willie silently began to nibble the cake, but with evident reluctance.

"Why, you do not seem to like it! Is it not good?"

"Yes, sir, thank you."

"Why don't you eat it, then?"

"My father," said Elizabeth.

"Well, Miss Dulan?"

"I think that Willie always carries every piece of cake he gets to his mother."

"But why not always prevent that by sending her a piece yourself?"

"Because, my dear father, I think it may be wrong to restrain the amiable spirit of self-denial evinced by the child."

"Then you are mistaken, Miss Dulan; and recollect that it is very irreverent in a young lady to express an opinion at variance with the spirit of what her father has just said."

Elizabeth meekly and in silence went to the pantry and cut a piece of cake, which she carefully wrapped up and gave to Willie for his mother. Willie received it with a humble and deprecatory look, as if he felt the whole responsibility and weight of the reproof that had fallen upon his cousin.

One Christmas-eve, when Willie was about seven years old, the widow and her son were sitting by the cottage hearth. The closed shutters, drawn curtains, clean hearth, and bright fire, threw an air of great comfort over the room. Mrs. Dulan sat at her little work-table, setting the finishing stitches in a fine linen shirt, the last of a dozen which she had been making for the doctor.

The snow-storm that had been raging all day long had subsided, though occasionally the light and drifted snow would be blown up from the ground by a gust of wind against the windows of the house.

"Poor boy," said the widow, looking at her son, "you look tired and sleepy; go to bed, Willie."

"O dear mamma, I am not tired, and I could not sleep at all while you are up alone and at work. Please let me stay up; but I will go to bed if you say so," added he submissively.

"Come and kiss me, darling. Yes, Willie, you may stay up as long as you like. I will go to bed myself," added she mentally, "so as not to keep the poor boy up."

"Well, Willie, I will tell you a story, darling, which will amuse you while I sew."

Just at this moment the sound of carriage-wheels, followed immediately by a jump from the box, and a smart rap at the door, caused the widow to start hastily from her seat. The door was opened, and Jake, the big black coachman of the old doctor, made his appearance, a heavy cloak and a large muffling hood hanging over his arm.

"Marm," said he, "it has clarred off beautiful, and massa has sent the carriage arter you, and he says how he would have sent it afore, but how the roads were blocked up with snow-drifts. Me and Pontius Pilate, and Massa John, has been all the arternoon a clarring it away; and I thinks, marm, if you don't come to-night, how the road will be as bad as ever to-morrow morning, with this wind a-blowing about the snow. Miss Lizzy has sent this hood of hern, and massa has sent the big cloth cloak of hizzen, so that you needn't catch cold."

Mrs. Dulan did not immediately reply, but looked at Willie, and seemed to reflect.

Jake added, "I hopes you'll come, marm, for massa, and Miss Lizzy, and Massa John has quite set their heads on having you with them to spend Christmas; and Massa John told me to tell you how he had bagged a fine passel of water-fowl and wild turkeys, and I

myself has made a trap for Massa Willie to catch snow-birds."

"Yes, we will go," said Mrs. Dulan. "Do me the favour, Jacob, to pour a pitcher of water on that fire, while I tie on Willie's cloak and mittens."

In twenty minutes more Willie was seated on his uncle's knees, by his bright fireside, and his mother sat conversing with John and Elizabeth, and a few neighbours whom the inclemency of the weather had not deterred from dropping in to spend Christmas-eve. The old housekeeper stood at the beaufet, cutting up seed cake and pouring out elder wine, which were soon passed round to the company.

That Christmas was a gorgeous morning. The sun arose and lit up into flashing splendour the icy glories of the landscape. From every roof and eave, from every bough and bush, dropped millions of blazing jewels. Earth wore a gorgeous bridal-dress, bedecked with diamonds. Within the doctor's house everything was comfortable as you could wish. A rousing fire of hickory wood roared upon the hearth, an abundant breakfast of coffee, tea, buckwheat cakes, muffins, eggs, wild-fowl, oysters, &c. &c., smoked upon the board. The family were all gathered in the breakfast-room. The doctor was serving out egg-nog from a capacious bowl upon the side-board.

"Cousin Elizabeth," said little Willie, taking her hand and leading her away to the sofa, "what do ladies love?"

"What do ladies love? Why, Willie, what a queer question!"

"Yes, but tell me what *do* ladies love?"

"Why, their papas, of course, and their brothers, and their relations; it would not be decorous to love any one else," said the prim maiden.

"Oh, you don't know what I mean; I mean what do ladies love *to have?* You know boys like to have kites and marbles, and traps to catch snow-birds, and picture-books, and halfpence, and such things. Now, what do ladies love to have?"

"Oh, now I understand you. Why, we like to have

a good assortment of crewels and floss to work tapestry with; and a quantity of bright-coloured silk to embroider with; and ——"

"Oh, that's what *you* like, Cousin Elizabeth; but mamma doesn't work samplers," said the boy, with a dash of pettish contempt in his tone. "Uncle has given me a bright new shilling for a Christmas gift, to do what I please with; and I want to get something with it for poor dear mamma."

"La! child, you can get nothing of any account with a shilling."

"Can't I?" said he, and his little face fell for an instant, but, soon lighting up, he exclaimed, "Oh, ho! Cousin Elizabeth, I am brighter than you are this time. A silver thimble is a very little thing, and can be bought with a shilling, I am sure; so I will buy one for mamma. Poor mamma has an old brass one now, which cankers her finger."

"Here, Willie," said Elizabeth, "I have not given you my Christmas gift. Take this shilling; and now run and ask your uncle to take you to the village with him when he goes, and then you can buy your thimble. You have enough to get one now."

Willie thanked his cousin with a hearty embrace, and ran off to do as she advised him. The family now sat down to breakfast, after which they all went to church, where the doctor performed divine service. A large party of friends and neighbours returned with them to dinner, and the remainder of the day was spent in hilarity and innocent enjoyment.

The next day the thimble was purchased, as agreed upon, and little Willie kept it a profound secret from his mother until the first evening on which they found themselves at home in their little parlour, when the candle was lit, and the little stand drawn to the fire, the work-box opened, and the old brass thimble put on. Then little Willie, glowing with blissful excitement, put his hand in his pocket to find his present. It was not there. He searched the other pocket, then his cap, then shook his cloak and looked about the carpet. Alarmed now,

he opened the door and was going out, when his mother called to him.

"What is the matter, Willie? Where are you going? What have you lost?"

"Nothing much, mother; I 'm only going out a minute," and he closed the door, and began an almost hopeless search by the moonlight for his lost treasure. Up and down the walk he searched without finding it. He opened the gate, and, peeping and peering about, wandered up the road, until his little feet and limbs got wet in the soft snow, and his hands became benumbed; when, feeling convinced that it was lost, he sat down and burst into a passionate fit of weeping. Let no one feel surprise or contempt at this. In this little affair of the thimble there had been disinterested love, self-sacrifice, anticipated joy, disappointment, and despair, though all expended on a cheap thimble. Yet Willie was but seven years old, and "thought as a child, felt as a child, understood as a child." I am a grown-up child now, and have had many troubles; but the most acute sorrow I ever felt was the death of my pet pigeon, when I was seven years old.

It was long before the storm in his little bosom subsided, but when at last it did, he turned to go home; he would not go before, lest he might grieve his mother with the sight of his tears. At last, weary and half frozen, he opened the cottage gate, and met his mother coming to look for him; and she who always spoke most gently to him, and for whose dear sake she was suffering now, by a sad chance, and out of her fright and vexation, sharply rebuked him and hurried him off to bed. "If dear mamma had known she would not have scolded me so, though," was his last thought as he sank into a feverish sleep. The next morning, when Mrs. Dulan arose, the heavy breathing and bright flush upon the cheek of her boy caught her attention, and roused her fears for his health. As she gazed, a sharp expression of pain contracted his features, and he awoke. Feebly stretching out his arms to embrace her, he said, "O mamma, Willie is so sick, and his breast hurts so bad!"

The child had caught the pleurisy.

It was late at night before medical assistance could be procured from a distant village. In the meantime the child's illness had fearfully progressed; and when at last the physician arrived and examined him, he could give no hopes of his recovery. Language cannot depict the anguish of the mother as she bent over the couch of her suffering boy; and if a grain could have increased the burden of her grief, it would have been felt in the memory of the few words of harsh rebuke when he had returned, half-frozen, and heavy-hearted, from his fruitless search after the thimble; for the kind Elizabeth had arrived and explained the incident of the night.

It was midnight of the ninth day. Willie had lain in a stupor for a whole day and night previous His mother stood by his bed; she neither spoke nor wept, but her face wore the expression of acute suffering. Her eyes were strained with an earnest, anxious, agonised gaze upon the deathly countenance of the boy. Old Dr. Dulan entered the room at this moment, and looking down at the child, and taking his thin cold hand in his own, felt his pulse, and, turning to the wretched mother, who had fixed her anxious eyes imploringly upon him, he said, "Hannah, my dear sister—but, O God! I cannot deceive you," and abruptly left the room.

"Elizabeth," said he to his daughter, who was sitting by the parlour fire, "go into the next room and remain with your aunt, and if anything occurs summon me at once; and, John, saddle my horse quickly, and ride over to Mrs. Caply, and tell her to come over here."

Mrs. Caply was the layer-out of the dead for the neighbourhood.

How tediously wore that dreary night away in the sick room, where the insensible child was watched by his mother and her friend! The flickering taper, which both forgot to snuff, would fitfully flare up, and reveal the watchers, the bed, and the prostrate form of the pale, stiff, motionless boy, with his eyes flared back with a fixed and horrid stare. In the parlour a party equally silent and gloomy kept their vigils. Dr. Dulan, his son, and the old woman, whose fearful errand made her

very presence a horror, formed the group. The old woman at last, weary at holding her tongue so long, broke silence by saying, "I always thought that child would never be raised, sir; he was so smart and clever, and so dutiful to his ma. He was too good for this world, sir How long has he been sick, sir?"

"Little more than a week; but I beg you will be silent, lest you disturb them in the next room."

"Yes, sir, certainly. Sick people ought to be kept quiet, though perhaps that don't much matter when they are dying. Well, poor little fellow, he was a pretty child, and will look lovely in his shroud and cap, and ——"

"Hush!" exclaimed John Dulan, in a tone so stern that the woman was constrained to be silent.

Daylight was now peeping in at the windows. The doctor arose, put out the lamps, opened the shutters, stirred the fire, and went into the next room. The widow was sitting in the same place, holding one of the boy's hands between her own, her head bowed down upon it. The doctor looked at the child; his eyes were now closed, as if in sleep; he laid his hand upon his brow, and, bending down, intently gazed upon him. The child opened his eyes slowly. Passing quickly round the bed, the doctor laid his hand upon the recumbent head and said, "Look up, Hannah, your child is restored." With an ecstatic expression of gratitude and joy, the mother started to her feet, and gazed upon her boy.

"Kiss me, mamma," said Willie, opening his gentle eyes, in which beamed a quiet look of recognition and love. The mother kissed her child repeatedly and fervently, while exclamations of profound gratitude to Heaven escaped her. The doctor went to the window, and threw open the shutters. The rising sun poured his light into the room, and lit it up with splendour.

I must transport you now, in imagination, over a few years of time and a few miles of country, and take you into a splendid drawing-room, in the handsome country-house of the Delanys, which, you remember, I described in the first part of this story, situated near the town of Richmond. On a luxurious sofa, in this superb room,

reclined a most beautiful woman. Her golden hair, divided above a high and classic brow, fell flashing and glittering upon her white bosom like sunbeams on the snow. Her eyes—but who can describe those glorious eyes of living sapphire? Sapphire! Compare her eloquent eyes to soulless gems? Her eyes! Why, when their serious light was turned upon you, you would feel spell-bound, entranced, as by a strain of rich and solemn music; and when their merry glance caught yours, you'd think there could not be a grief or a sin on earth! But the greatest charm in that fascinating countenance were the lips—small, full, red, their habitual expression being that of heavenly serenity and goodness.

Bending over the arm of the sofa, his head resting upon his hand, was a young man; his eyes earnestly, anxiously, pleadingly fixed upon the face of his companion, in whose ear, in a full, rich, and passionate tone, he was pouring a tale of love, hopeless almost to despair. The girl listened with a saddened countenance, and turning her large eyes, humid with tears, upon his face, she spoke, "Richard, I am grieved beyond measure. O cousin, I do not merit your deep and earnest love. I am an ingrate! I do not return it!"

"Do you dislike me?"

"Oh, no, no; indeed I do not. I esteem and respect you; nay, more, I love you as a brother."

"Then, dear, dearest Alice, since I am honoured with your esteem, if not blessed with your love, give me your hand—be my wife—and ultimately, perhaps——"

"Horrible!" exclaimed the young girl, leaving the room abruptly.

"What the d—l does that fool mean?" exclaimed Richard Delany, as an angry flush passed over his face. "One would think I had insulted her. Colonel Delany's penniless dependant should receive with more humility, if not with more gratitude, an offer of marriage from his heir. But I see how it is: she loves that beggarly Dulan—that wretched usher. But death, death to the poverty-stricken wretch, if he presume to cross my path!" and the clenched fists, livid complexion, and

grinding teeth gave fearful testimony to the deadly hatred that had sprung up in his bosom.

At this moment Colonel Delany entered the room, and, taking a seat, said, "Richard, I have somewhat to say to you, and I wish you seriously to attend. You know that I am your best, your most disinterested friend, and that your welfare lies nearer to my heart than aught else earthly. Well, I have observed, with much regret, the increased interest you *seem* to take in your cousin—your passion for her, in fact. These things are easily arrested in the commencement, and they must be arrested. You can do it, and you must do it! I have other views for you. Promise me, my son, that you will give up all thoughts of Alice."

Richard, who had remained in deep thought during his father's address, now looked up and replied, "But, my father, Alice is a very beautiful, very amiable, very intellectual ——"

"Beggar!"

"Father!"

"Unbend that brow, sir! nor dare to address your parent in that insolent tone! And now, sir, once for all, let us come to the point, and understand each other perfectly. Should you persist in your addresses to Alice, should you finally marry her, not a shilling, not a penny of your father's wealth shall fall on an ungrateful son."

Richard reflected profoundly a moment, and then replied, "Fear of the loss of wealth would not deter me from any step; but the loss of my father's love would be an evil I could never risk to encounter. I will obey you, sir."

"I am not satisfied," thought the old gentleman, as he left his son, after a few more moments of conversation. "I am not satisfied. I will watch them closely, and in the course of the day speak to Alice."

An opportunity soon offered. He found himself alone with Alice after tea.

"Alice," he commenced, "I wish to make a confidant of you;" and he proceeded to unfold to her, at some length, his ambitious projects for his son, and concluded

by giving her to understand, pretty distinctly, that he wished *his* son to select a wealthy bride, and that any other one would never be received by him as his daughter.

"I think I understand, although I cannot entirely sympathise with you, my dear uncle," said Alice, in a low, trembling tone. "All this has been said for my edification. That your mind may be perfectly at rest on this subject, I must say what may be deemed presumptuous: I would not, could not marry your son, either with or without your consent or under any circumstances whatever."

"Alice! my dear Alice! how could you suppose I made any allusion to you? O Alice, Alice!"

And the old man talked himself into a fit of remorse, sure enough. He believed Alice, although he could not believe his son. The old gentleman's uneasiness was not entirely dispelled; for although Alice might not now love Richard, yet time could make a great change in her sentiments.

Alice Raymond, the orphan niece of Colonel Delany, was the daughter of an officer in the British army. Mr. Raymond was the youngest son of an old, wealthy, and haughty family in Dorsetshire. At a very early age he married the youngest sister of Colonel Delany. Having nothing but his pay, all the miseries of an improvident marriage fell upon the young couple. The same hour that gave existence to Alice deprived her of her mother. The facilities to ambition offered by America, and the hope of distracting his grief, induced Mr. Raymond to dispose of his commission and embark for the Western World. Another object, though the last named, was the first in deciding him to cross the Atlantic: this object was to place his little Alice in the arms of her maternal grandmother, the elder Mrs. Delany, then a widow and a resident under the roof of her son, Colonel Delany. A few weeks after the sailing of the ship in which, with his infant daughter, Mr. Raymond took passage, the small-pox broke out on board, and he was one of its earliest victims.

With his dying breath he consigned Alice to the care

of the captain of the ship, a kind-hearted man, who undertook to convey the poor babe to her grandmother. On the arrival of the infant at the mansion of Colonel Delany, a new bereavement awaited her. Mrs. Delany, whose health had been declining ever since her settlement in her new home, was fast sinking to the grave. Colonel Delany, however, received the orphan infant with the greatest tenderness. Sixteen years of affectionate care had given him a father's place in the heart of Alice, and a father's influence over her. Within the last year the sunshine of Alice's life had been clouded.

Richard Delany, the only son and heir of Colonel Delany, had been sent to England at the age of fifteen, to receive a college education. After remaining eight years abroad, the last year of his absence being spent in making the grand tour, he returned to his adopted country and his father's house. He was soon attracted by the beauty and grace of Alice. I say, by her beauty and grace, because the moral and intellectual worth of the young girl he had not the taste to admire, even had he had, at this early period of his acquaintance with her, an opportunity to judge. The attentions of Richard Delany to his cousin were not only extremely distressing to her, but highly displeasing to his father, who had formed, as we have seen, the most ambitious projects for his son. Richard Delany was not far wrong in his conjecture concerning the young usher, who was no other than our old friend William Dulan—little Willie, who had now grown to man's estate, the circumstances of whose introduction to the Delany family I must now proceed to explain.

To pass briefly over the events of William Dulan's childhood and youth. At the age of ten years he entered, as a pupil, the collegiate school over which Dr. Dulan presided, where he remained until his nineteenth year. It had been the wish of William Dulan and his mother that he should take holy orders, and he was about to enter a course of theological study, under the direction of his uncle, when an event occurred which totally altered the plan of his life. This event was the death of Dr. Dulan, his kind uncle and benefactor. All thoughts of the Church

had now to be relinquished, and present employment, by which to support his mother, to be sought.

It was twelve o'clock at night, about three months after the death of Dr. Dulan. The mother of William, by her hearth, still plied her needle, now the only means of their support. Her son sat by her side, as of old. He had been engaged some hours in reading to her. At length, throwing down the book, he exclaimed, "Dearest, dearest mother, lay by that work; it shames my manhood, it breaks my heart to see you thus coining your very health and life into pence for our support; while I! O mother, I feel like a human vampire preying upon your slender strength!"

The widow looked into the face of her son, saw the distress, the almost agony of his countenance, and, quickly folding up her work, said gently, "I am not sewing so much from necessity now, dear William, as because I was not sleepy, being so much interested in your book."

The morning succeeding this little scene, William, as was his wont, arose early, and, going into the parlour, made up the fire, hung the kettle on, and was engaged in setting the room in order, when his mother entered, who observing his occupation, said, "Ever since your return from school, William, you have anticipated me in this morning labour. You must now give it up, my son; I do not like to see you perform these menial offices."

"No service performed for my mother can be menial, said Willie, giving her a fond smile.

"My darling son!"

After breakfast William took up his hat and went out. It was three hours before he returned. His face was beaming with happiness, as he held an open letter in his hand.

"See, mother dear, kind Providence has opened a way for us at last."

"What is it, my son?" said the widow anxiously.

"Mr. Keene, you know, who left this neighbourhood about three years ago, went to —— County, and established a school, which has succeeded admirably. He is in want of an assistant, and has written to me, offer-

ing four hundred dollars a year for my services in his institution."

"And you will have to leave me, William!"

These words escaped the widow with a deep sigh, and without reflection. She added in an instant, with assumed cheerfulness, "Yes, of course—so I would have you do."

A month from this conversation William Dulan was established in his new home, in the family of Mr. Keene, the Principal of Bay Grove Academy, near Richmond.

The first meeting of William Dulan and Alice Raymond took place under the following circumstances. On the arrival of Richard Delany at home, his father, who kept up the good old customs of his English ancestors, gave a dinner and ball in honour of his son's coming of age. All the gentry of his own and the adjoining counties accepted invitations to attend. Among the guests was William Dulan. He was presented to Miss Raymond, the young hostess of the evening, by Mr. Keene. Young Dulan was at first dazzled by the transcendent beauty of her face and the airy elegance of her form, then won by the gentleness of her manners, the elevation of her mind, and the purity of her heart. One ball in a country neighbourhood generally puts people in the humour of the thing, and is frequently followed by many others. It was so in this instance; and William Dulan and Alice Raymond met frequently in scenes of gaiety, where neither took an active part in the festivities. A more intimate acquaintance produced a mutual and just estimation of each other's character, and preference soon warmed into love.

From the moment in which the jealous fears of Richard Delany were aroused, he resolved to throw so much coldness and *hauteur* in his manner toward that young gentleman as should banish him from the house. This, however, did not effect the purpose for which it was designed, and he finally determined to broach the subject to his father. Old Colonel Delany, whose "optics" were so very "keen" to spy out the danger of his son's forming a misalliance, was stone blind when such a misfortune threatened Alice, liked the young man very much, and

could see nothing out of the way in his attentions to his niece, and finally refused to close his doors against him at his son's instance. While this conversation was going on the summer vacation approached, and William made arrangements to spend it with his mother.

One morning William Dulan sat at his desk. His face was pale, his spirits depressed. He loved Alice, oh, how madly! He could not forego the pleasure of her society —yet how was all this to end? Long years must elapse before, if ever, he could be in a situation to ask the hand of Alice. With his head bowed upon his hand, he remained lost in thought.

"Mr. Dulan, may your class come up? We know our lessons," said a youthful voice at his elbow.

"Go to your seats, boys," said a rich, melodious, kind voice; "I wish to have a few moments' conversation with Mr. Dulan;" and Dr. Keene, the principal, stood by his side.

"My dear Dulan," said he, "you are depressed, but I bring you that which will cheer your spirits. I have decided to give up my school here into your sole charge, if you will accept it. I have received, through the influence of some of my political friends, a lucrative and permanent appointment under the government, the nature of which I will explain to you by and by. I think of closing my connection with this school about the end of the next term. What say you? Will you be my successor?"

Dulan started to his feet, seized both the hands of his friend, pressed them fervently, and would have thanked him, but utterance failed. Dr. Keene insisted on his resuming his seat, and then added, "The income of the school amounts to twelve hundred dollars a year. The school-house, dwelling-house, with its out-buildings, and numerous improvements upon the premises, go into the bargain. Yes, Dulan, I have known your secret long," said he, smiling good-humouredly, "and sincerely, though silently, commiserated the difficulties of your position; and I assure you, Dulan, that the greatest pleasure I felt in receiving my appointment was in the opportunity it

give me of making you and Alice happy. Stop, stop, Dulan, let me talk," laughed Keene, as William opened a battery of gratitude upon him. "It is now near the end of July. I should like to see you installed here on the first of September. The August vacation will give you an opportunity of making all your arrangements. I must now leave you to your labours."

Every boy that asked to go out went out that day. Every boy that said his task got praised, and every boy that missed his lesson got blamed. The day was awfully tedious for all that; but evening came at last, and the school was dismissed. William, after spending an unusually long time in the "outward adorning," hastened with a joy-beaming countenance to the home of his Alice. In the full flow of his joy he was met by a sudden disappointment. The servant who met him at the door informed him that Colonel Delany, Miss Raymond, and Mr. Delany had set off for Richmond, with the intention of staying a couple of weeks. Crestfallen, William turned from the door. This was only a momentary disappointment, however, and soon his spirits rose, and he joyfully anticipated the time of the Delanys' return. They were to be back in time for the approaching examination and exhibition at Bay Grove Academy; and in preparing his pupils for this event William Dulan found ample employment for his time and thoughts. I will not weary you with a description of the exhibition. It passed off in that school pretty much as it does in others. The Delanys, however, had not returned in time to be present—nay, the very last day of William's stay had dawned, yet they had not arrived. William had written to his mother that he would be home on a stated day, and not even for the delight of meeting the mistress of his heart, the period of whose return was now uncertain, would he disappoint her. William was engaged in packing his trunk, when Dr. Keene, again the harbinger of good tidings, entered his room.

"My dear Dulan," said he, "I have come to tell you that the Delanys have arrived. You will have an opportunity of spending your last evening with Alice."

William shuffled his things into his trunk, pressed down the lid, locked it, and, hastily bidding his friend good evening, took his hat and hurried from the house. Arrived at Colonel Delany's, he was shown into the drawing-room, and was delighted to find Alice its sole occupant.

The undisguised joy with which she received him left scarcely a doubt upon his mind as to the reception of his intended proposals. After a few mutual inquiries respecting health, friends, and so forth, William took her white hand in his, and said, or attempted to say—I know not what—it stuck in his throat, and he remained merely silent, holding the hand of Alice There is something so extremely difficult about making a premeditated declaration of love. It is much easier when it can be surprised from a man. William knew the moments were very precious. He knew that Colonel Delany or his son might be expected to enter at any moment, and there would be an end of opportunity for a month or six weeks to come; yet there he sat, holding her hand, the difficulty becoming greater every minute, while the crimson cheek of Alice burned with a deeper blush. At length footsteps approached. William heard them, and, becoming alarmed, hastily, hurriedly, but fervently and passionately exclaimed, "Alice, I love you with my whole heart, mind, and strength! I love you as we are commanded only to love God. Dearest Alice, will you become my wife?"

"Miss Raymond," said Richard Delany, entering at this moment, "my father desires your presence instantly in his study, on business of the utmost moment to yourself. Mr. Dulan, I hope, will excuse me, as we have just arrived, and many matters crave my attention. Good evening, sir;" and, bowing haughtily, he attended his cousin from the room. William Dulan rose, and took his hat to go.

"Farewell, Mr. Dulan," said Alice kindly, "if we should not meet again before your departure."

"Farewell, sweet Alice," murmured William Dulan, as he left the house.

It was a glorious Sabbath morning early in August. The widow's cottage gleamed in the dark bosom of the wood like a gem in the tresses of beauty. Everything wore its brightest aspect. The windows of the little parlour were open, and the songs of birds and the perfume of flowers were wafted through them. But the little breakfast-table, with its snowy cloth, and its one plate, cup, and saucer, looked almost piteous from its solitude. Upon the clean white coverlet of the bed sat the widow's little black bonnet and shawl, prayer-book, and clean pocket-handkerchief, folded with its sprig of lavender. It was Communion Sunday, and the widow would not miss going to church on any account. She despatched her breakfast quickly—poor thing, she had not much appetite. She had sat up half the night previous, awaiting the arrival of William, but he had not come; and a man from the village, that had called at her cottage early on this morning, had informed her that the mail-stage had arrived on the night previous without any passengers. As the stage would not pass again for a week, the widow could not expect to see or hear from her son for that length of time. After putting away her breakfast-things she donned her bonnet and shawl, and, taking her prayer-book, opened the door to go out. What a pleasant sight met her eyes! A neat one-horse carriage, or rather cart, stood at the door—her son was just alighting from it. In another instant he had clasped his mother in his arms.

"O my William, my William, I am *so* glad to see you!" exclaimed the delighted mother, bursting into tears. "Oh, but this is so joyful, so unexpected, dear William! I looked for you, indeed, last night; but, as you did not come, I gave you up, unwillingly enough, for a week. But come in, darling; you 've not breakfasted, I know."

"No, dear mother, because I wished to breakfast with you; but let me give something to the horse first, and you sit in the door, dear mother—I do not want to lose sight of you a moment—while waiting on Rosinante."

"Never mind, William, old Jake can do that. Here, Jake," said she, as the old servant approached, "take

charge of Master William's horse." Then turning to William, she said, "John sends old Jake over every morning to help me."

"Ah! How are cousins John and Elizabeth?"

"Oh, very hearty. We shall see them this morning at church."

"I did not come in the stage yesterday, mother," said William, as they took their seats at the breakfast-table, "because I had purchased this light wagon and horse for you to ride to church in, and I came down in it. I reached the river last night, but could not get across. The old ferryman had gone to bed, and would not rise. Well, after breakfast, dear mother, I shall have the pleasure of driving you to church in your own carriage," added William, smiling.

"Ah, William, what a blessing you are to me, my dear son! But it must have taken the whole of your quarter's salary to buy this for me!" And she glanced with pain at his rusty and threadbare suit of black, and at his napless hat.

"Ah, mother, I was selfish after all, and deserve no credit; for I laid the money out in the way which would give myself the most pleasure. But see, here is old Jake to tell us the carriage is ready. Come, mother, I will hand you in, and as we go along I will unfold to you some excellent news, which I am dying to deliver." So saying, he placed his mother carefully in the little carriage, and, seating himself beside her, drove off, leaving old Jake in charge of the house.

"There is plenty of time, dear mother; so we will drive slowly, that we may talk with more comfort."

William then proceeded to relate at large all that had taken place during his residence at Bay Grove, not omitting his love for Alice, of whom he gave a glowing description, nor the bright prospects which the kindness of Dr. Keene opened before him. Then he described the beautiful dwelling, which would become vacant on the removal of Dr. Keene's family, which was expected to take place some time during the coming autumn. To this dwelling he intended to remove his mother, and hoped to bear his bride.

To all this the mother listened with grateful joy. At the church William Dulan met again his cousins, John and Elizabeth, who expressed their delight at the meeting, and insisted that William and his mother should return with them to dinner. This, however, both mother and son declined, as they wished to spend the day at home together.

William Dulan spent a month with his mother, and when the moment arrived that was to terminate his visit he said to her, "Now, dear mother, cheer up! This parting is so much better than our last parting. Now I am going to prepare a beautiful home for you, and when I next come it will be for the purpose of carrying you back with me."

The widow gave her son a beaming look of love.

With a "Heaven be with you, my dearest mother!" and "God bless you, my best son!" they parted. They parted to meet no more on earth.

Let us now return to the mansion of Colonel Delany, and learn the nature of that "matter of the utmost moment to herself," that had summoned Alice so inopportunely from the side of her lover.

On reaching the study of her uncle Miss Raymond found him in deep consultation with an elderly gentleman in black. Various packets of papers were before him; an open letter was held in his hand. He arose to meet Alice as she advanced into the room, and, taking her hand with grave respect, said, "Lady Hilden, permit me to congratulate you on your accession to your title and estates."

"Sir! uncle!" exclaimed Alice, gazing at him with the utmost astonishment, scarcely conscious whether she was waking or dreaming.

"Yes, my dear, it is true. Your grandfather—old Lord Hilden—departed this life on the 6th of March last. His only living son survived him but a few weeks, and died without issue, and the title and estates, with a rent-roll of £8000 per annum, have descended, in right of your father, to yourself."

"I shall have so much to give to William," involuntarily exclaimed Alice.

"Madam!" exclaimed Colonel Delany in surprise.

Alice blushed violently at having thought aloud. "Dear sir," said she, "I did not know what I was saying."

"Ah, well, I suppose you are a little startled with this sudden news," said the Colonel, smiling; "but now it is necessary for you to examine, with us, some of these papers. Ah, I crave your pardon, Mr. Reynard. Lady Hilden, this is Mr. Reynard, late solicitor to your deceased grandfather, the baron."

Great was the excitement in the neighbourhood when it was noised abroad that Alice Raymond had become a baroness in her own right, and the possessor of a large estate in England. And when, for the first time since her accession to her new dignities, she appeared at church in deep mourning, every eye was turned upon her, and she almost sank beneath the gaze of so many people.

In the height of the "nine days' wonder" William Dulan returned, and was greeted by the news from every quarter.

"O Alice—lost! lost! lost to me for ever!" exclaimed he in agony, as he paced with hurried strides up and down the floor of his little room. "O my mother, if it were not for thee, I should pray that this wretched heart of mine would soon be stilled in death!"

If any human being will look candidly upon the events of his own life, and the history of his own heart, with a view to examine the causes of suffering, he will be constrained to admit that by far the greater portion of his miseries have originated in misapprehension, and might have been easily prevented or cured by a little calm investigation. It was so with William Dulan, who was at this moment suffering the most acute agony of mind he ever felt in his life, from a misconception, a doubt, which a ten minutes' walk to the house of Colonel Delany, and a ten minutes' talk with Alice, would have dissipated for ever.

If Richard Delany was anxious before to wed his cousin for love, he was now half crazy to take that step by which both love and ambition would be gratified to the utmost.

He actually loved her ten times as much as formerly.

The "beggar" was beautiful, but the baroness was bewitching. Spurred on, then, he determined to move heaven, earth, and the other place, if necessary, to accomplish his object. He beset Lady Hilden with the most earnest prayers, and protestations, and entreaties, reminding her that he loved and wooed her before the dawn of her prosperity, and appealed to her for the disinterestedness of his passion. But all in vain. He even besought his father to use his influence with Alice in his favour. Colonel Delany, his objections being all now removed, urged his niece, by her affection, by her compassion, and, finally, after some delicate hesitation, by her gratitude, to accept the proffered hand of his son. But Alice was steadfast in her rejection.

"A change came o'er the spirit of her dream. Alas, alas! that a change of fortune should work such a change of spirit! Alice Raymond was now Lady Hilden. Her once holy, loving, meek blue eyes were now splendid with light and joy. Upon cheek and lip, once so delicately blooming, now glanced and glowed a rich, bright crimson. Her once softly-falling step had become firm, elastic, and stately. "A peeress in my own right!" was the thought that sent a spasmodic joy to the heart of Alice. I am sorry she was not more philosophical, more exalted; but I cannot help it, so it was; and if Alice "put on airs," it must not be charged upon her biographer.

Time sped on. A rumour of an approaching marriage between Mr. Richard Delany and Lady Hilden was industriously circulated, and became the general topic of conversation in the neighbourhood. To avoid hearing it talked of, William Dulan sedulously kept out of company. He had never seen Alice since she became Lady Hilden. Dr. Keene had removed with his family from Bay Grove, and the principal government and emolument of the school had devolved upon young Dulan. The Christmas holidays were at hand, and he resolved to take advantage of the opportunity offered by them to remove his mother to Bay Grove. On the last evening of his stay something in the circumstance brought back forcibly to his mind his last conversation with Alice—that con-

versation had also taken place on the eve of a journey; and the association of ideas awakened, together with the belief that he would never again have an opportunity of beholding her, irresistibly impelled him to seek an interview with Alice.

Twilight was fast fading into night. Lady Hilden stood alone, gazing out from the window of her uncle's drawing-room. She had changed again since we saw her last. There was something of sorrow or bitterness in the compressed or quivering lip. Her eye was bright as ever, but it was the brightness of the icicle glancing in the winter sun—it was soon quenched in tears; and as she gazed out upon the gloomy mountain, naked forest, and frozen lake, she murmured, "I used to love summer and day so much; now ——" [A servant entered with lights. "Take them away," said Alice. She was obeyed.] "The dark soul in the dark scene: there is almost repose in that harmony."

"Mr. Dulan!" said the servant, re-appearing at the door; and William Dulan followed the announcement.

"You may bring in the light now," said Alice.

"Will Lady Hilden accept congratulations offered at so late a period?" said William Dulan, with a respectful bow.

Alice, who had been startled out of her self-possession, replied only by a bow.

"I was about to leave this neighbourhood for a short time, but could not do so without calling to bid you farewell, fearing you might be gone to England before I return." William Dulan's voice was beginning to quaver.

"I have no present intention of going to England."

"No? Such a report is rife in the neighbourhood."

"One is not chargeable with the reports of the neighbourhood."

Alice said this in a peculiar tone, as she glanced at the sorrow-stricken visage of the young man.

A desultory conversation ensued, after which William Dulan rose to take his leave, which he did in a choking, inaudible voice. As he turned to leave the room his

ghastly face and unsteady step attested, in language not to be misunderstood, the acuteness and intensity of his suffering. Alice did not misunderstand it. She uttered one word in a low and trembling tone: "William!"

He was at her side in an instant: a warm blush glowing over bosom, cheek, and brow, her eyes were full of tears, as she raised them to his face, eloquent with all a maiden may not speak.

"Angel! I love—I adore thee!" exclaimed the youth, sinking at her feet.

"Love me, William, only love me, and let us both adore the Being who hath given us to each other!"

It was a cold night on the shores of the ice-bound Rappahannock. A storm of wind and snow that had been fiercely raging all day long at length subsided. At a low cabin, which served the threefold purposes of post-office, ferry-house, and tavern, an old grey-headed man was nodding over a smouldering fire. His slumbers were disturbed by the blast of the stage horn and the wheels of the coach, which stopped before the door.

Two travellers alighted and entered the cabin. The old ferryman arose to receive them.

"Any chance of crossing to-night, Uncle Ben?" inquired the younger traveller.

"He-he! hardly, Mr. William; the river has been closed for a week," chuckling at the thought that he should be saved the trouble of taking the coach across.

"Oh, of course, I did not expect to go on the boat; I was thinking of crossing on the ice."

"I think that would scarcely be safe, Mr. William; the weather has moderated a great deal since nightfall, and I rather think the ice may be weak."

"Pooh! nonsense! fiddle-de-dee!" exclaimed the other traveller testily; "do you think that a few hours of moderate weather could effectually weaken the ice of a river that has been hard frozen for a week? Why, at this moment, a coach might be driven across with perfect safety!"

"I shouldn't like to try it, though, sir," said the driver, who entered at this moment.

"The gentleman can try it if he likes," continued the old man, with a grin; "but I do hopes Mr. Dulan won't."

"Why, the ice will certainly bear a foot-passenger safely across," smiled William Dulan.

"I daresay it may; but, at any rate, I wouldn't try it, Master William—'specially as it 's a long, dark, slushy road between here and the widow's."

"Why, Uncle Ben, do you think I am a young chicken, to be killed by wetting my feet?" asked William, laughing. "Besides, at this very moment my good mother is waiting for me, and has a blazing fire, a pot of strong coffee, and a bowl of oysters in readiness. I would not disappoint her, or myself, for a good deal."

"If it were not for this confounded lameness in my feet I would not stop at this vile hole to-night," said the elder traveller, who was no other than Richard Delany, whom imperative business had called to this part of the country, and who had thus become, very reluctantly, the travelling companion of William Dulan.

"Nobody asked you, sir," exclaimed the old man, who did not seek popularity.

William Dulan, who by this time had resumed his cloak, and received a lighted lantern from the old ferryman, took his way to the river, accompanied by the latter. Arrived at its edge, he turned, shook hands with the old man, and stepped upon the ice. Old Ben remained, with his eyes anxiously strained after the light of the lantern, as it was borne across the river. It was already half way across. Suddenly a breaking sound, a fearful shriek, a quenched light, and all was dark and still upon the surface of the ice; but, beneath, a young strong life was battling fiercely with death. Ah! who can tell the horrors of that frightful struggle in the dark, cold, ice-bound prison of the waters?

The old man turned away aghast with horror, and his eyes fell upon the countenance of Richard Delany, which was now lit up with demoniac joy, as he muttered between his teeth, "Good, good! Alice shall be mine now!"

It was night in the peaceful cottage of the widow. All the little *agrémens* her son had pictured were there. A little round table, covered with a snowy cloth, stood in readiness. An easy chair was turned with its back to the fire, and on it a dressing-gown, and before it lay a pair of soft, warm slippers. The restless, joyous, anxious mother was reading over, for the twentieth time, her son's last letter, in which he promised to be home punctually on that very evening. Hours flew on, but he did not come. At length one o'clock struck, and startled the widow from her meditative posture. "I must go to bed; I must not look pale with watching to-morrow, and alarm my good son. It is just as it was before; he cannot get across the river to-night. I shall see him early to-morrow." Removing the things from about the fire, and setting the room in the nicest order, the widow retired to bed.

She rose early in the morning to prepare a good breakfast for her son. "He shall have buckwheat cakes this morning; he is so fond of them," said she, as she busied herself in preparation.

Everything was in readiness, yet William came not The morning passed on. The mother grew impatient.

"It is certainly high time he was here now," said she. "I will go through the woods towards the high road, and see if he is coming;" and, putting on her bonnet and shawl, she set out. She had just entered the wood when two advancing figures caught her attention. The path was so narrow that they were walking one behind the other.

"Ah! there he is, and John Dulan is with him," exclaimed the mother as they drew near.

The foremost man was indeed John Dulan, who held out his hand as they met.

"Ah! how do you do, John? How do you do? This is so kind of you! But stand aside — excuse me — I want to see that youth behind you!" and the widow brushed past him, and caught to her bosom — old Ben, the ferryman.

"My gracious! I thought you were my son! Dear me, how absurd!" exclaimed the widow, releasing him.

"Let us go on to the cottage, aunt," said John Dulan sadly.

"Yes, do. I am looking every minute for William. Oh, you can tell me, Uncle Ben—did he reach the ferry last night?"

"Yes, madam," groaned the old man.

"Why, you alarm me! Why didn't he come home, then?"

"He did try—he did try! I begged him not to, but he would! Oh, dear! oh, dear!"

"Why, what, in Heaven's name, is the matter? What has happened? Is my son ill?"

"Tell her, Mr. Dulan—tell her! I could not, to save my life!"

The widow turned very pale.

"Where is William? Where is my son? Is he ill? Is he ill?"

"My dearest aunt—do try to compose yourself!" said John Dulan, in a trembling voice.

"Where is my son? Where is he?"

"You cannot see him to-day!"

"Yet he was at the ferry-house last night! Great God! it cannot be!" cried the mother, suddenly growing very pale and faint. "Oh, no! Merciful Providence, such sorrow cannot be in store for me! He is not ——"

She could not finish the sentence, but turned a look of agonising inquiry on John Dulan. He did not speak.

"Answer! answer!" almost screamed the mother.

John Dulan turned away.

"Is my son — is my son *dead?*"

"He is in heaven, I trust," sobbed John.

A shriek, the most wild, shrill, and unearthly that ever came from the death-throe of a breaking heart, rose upon the air, and echoed through the woods; and the widow sank, fainting, to the ground. They raised her up — the blood was flowing in torrents from her mouth. They bore her to the house, and laid her on the bed. John Dulan watched beside her, while the old man hastened to procure assistance.

The life of the widow was despaired of for many weeks.

She recovered from one fit of insensibility only to relapse into another. At length, however, she was pronounced out of danger. But the white hair, silvered within the last few weeks, the strained eyes, contracted brow, and shuddering form, marked the presence of a scathing sorrow.

One day, while lying in this state, a travelling-carriage drew up before the door, and a young, fair girl, clad in deep mourning, alighted and entered. Elizabeth, who was watching beside her, stooped down and whispered very low, "The betrothed bride of your son."

The young girl approached the bed, and, taking the hand of the sufferer, exclaimed, "Mother, mother, you are not alone in your sorrow! I have come to live or die by you, as my strength may serve!"

The widow opened her arms and received her in an embrace. They wept. The first blessed tears that had relieved the burdened heart of either were shed together.

Alice never left her. When the widow was sufficiently recovered they went to England. The best years of the life of Alice were spent in soothing the declining days of William Dulan's mother. The face of Alice was the last object her eyes rested on in life; and the hands of Alice closed them in death.

Alice never married, but spent the remainder of her life in ministering to the suffering poor around her.

I neglected to mention that, during the illness of Mrs. Dulan, the body of her son was found, and interred in this spot by the request of his mother.

"What becomes of the moral?" you will say.

I have told you a true story. Had I created these beings from imagination, I should also have judged them —punished the bad and rewarded the good. But these people actually lived, moved, and had their being in the real world, and have now gone to render in their account to their Divine Creator and Judge. The case of Good *versus* Evil comes on in another world, at another tribunal, and, no doubt, will be equitably adjudged.

As I fear my readers may be dying to know what farther became of our cheery set of travellers, I may, on

some future occasion, gratify their laudable desire after knowledge; only informing them at present that we did reach our destination at ten o'clock that night in safety, although it was very dark when we passed down the dreaded Gibbet Hill and forded the dismal Bloody Run Swamp; that Aunt Peggy's cap was not mashed by Uncle Clive's hat, and that Miss Christine did not put her feet into Cousin Kitty's bandbox, to the demolition of her bonnet; but that both bonnet and cap survived to grace the heads of their respective proprietors. The only mishap that occurred, dear reader, befel your obsequious servitor, who went to bed with a sick headache, caused really by her acute sympathy with the misfortunes of the hero and heroine of our aunt's story, but which Miss Christine grossly attributed to a hearty supper of oysters and soft crabs, eaten at twelve o'clock at night, which, of course, you and I know had nothing at all to do with it.

THE END.

E. J. O. Morgan
Ardeandrith

THE

CURSE OF CLIFTON:

A TALE OF

EXPIATION AND REDEMPTION.

BY

MRS. EMMMA NEVITT SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "THE DESERTED WIFE," "VIRGINIA AND MAGDALENE," "BRANNONDALE," "THE BISCARDED WIFE," ETC.

LONDON:
DAVID BRYCE, AMEN CORNER, PATERNOSTER ROW.

THE CURSE OF CLIFTON.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOUNTAIN HUT.

Upon a glorious morning in the midsummer of 18—, two equestrian travellers spurred their horses up the ascent of the Eagle's Flight, the loftiest and most perilous pass of the Alleghanies.

Though the sun was near the meridian, and all the sky above was "darkly, deeply, beautifully blue," and perfectly clear, yet all the earth beneath was covered by a thick, low-lying fog.

On reaching the highest point of the pass, both travellers drew rein and paused, looking—north, south, east, west—over the ocean of vapour rolling from horizon to horizon below them! And while they so pause, let us catch that nearly vertical ray of the sun that falls upon them, lighting up the group like fire above the fog, and daguerreotype them as they stand.

Both are young men of about the same age, probably twenty-five; both are well mounted upon fine bay horses; and both wear the undress uniform of the —— regiment of Cavalry—and here all resemblance between them ceases.

He on the right hand, who holds in his horse's head with so tight a rein, causing the gallant steed to arch his beautiful neck so gracefully, while he lets fly a falcon-glance around the shrouded horizon, is Archer Clifton of Clifton, now holding the rank of Captain in the —— regiment of Cavalry. His form is of middle size, strongly built, yet elegantly proportioned; his complexion is dark and bronzed as by exposure; his features are Roman; his hair and whiskers, trimly cut, are of the darkest chestnut, with what painters

call *cool* lights; which is to say, that there is no warmth of colouring even where the sun lights. Indeed, there is no warmth about the looks of the whole man. His eyes are singularly beautiful and brilliant, combining all those dark, shifting, scintillating, prismatic hues that would drive an artist mad for want of colours to portray, or an author to despair for lack of words to describe. He wears the dark blue uniform of his regiment, and manages his noble charger with the ease and grace only to be found in the accomplished cavalry officer.

He upon the left hand, who, with languid air and loosened rein, inclines his body forward, permitting his graceful horse to droop his head and scent the earth, as in quest of herbage, is Francis Fairfax, of Green Plains, a lieutenant in the company under the command of Captain Clifton. He is of about the same height as Clifton, but his figure is slender almost to fragility. His features are delicate and piquant. His complexion is fair and transparent. His hair is also very fair, and waves off from a forehead so snowy, round, and smooth, as to seem child-like, especially with those clear blue eyes, that now brood roguishly under their golden lashes, as in profound quest of mischief, and now light up and sparkle with fun and frolic. He *mis*-manages his spoiled pet of a steed with the charming *insouciance* only to be seen in the amateur poet, painter, player, musician, &c. &c. And yet there is sometimes an earnest, thoughtful aspect about the youth that surprises one into the suspicion that all his levity is superficial, and hides his deeper and better nature, as stubble sometimes covers and conceals a mine of precious metal.

"Well!" at last spoke Mr. Fairfax, "it is now about twelve hours since we were emptied out of that atrocious old stage-coach, which, for a week past, has been beating us about in its interior from side to side, and from seat to ceiling, as if we were a lump of butter in an old woman's churn, and whose kindest turn of all to us was, when it turned over and shook us out down the precipice, and into the trough of the Wolf's Lick, as if we had been apples fed to the pigs! Oh, by the lost baronetcy of the house of Fairfax! my self-esteem will never recover the effects of it! Perdition seize the picturesque at this price! And ever since long before daybreak this morning have we been wandering about over

these mountain-tops, with the earth below us hidden in mist, and only the highest peaks looming through the sea of vapour like islands in the ocean; and *we* plunging wildly about in the fog, like Death on the pale horse riding the waves, and at the momentarily-recurring risk of riding over some hidden precipice of a thousand feet perpendicular. If this be your glorious mountain-scenery, to the demon with it! for I had as lief be on the open sea with the 'Ancient Mariner!'"

To this half-petulant, half-laughing philippic, Captain Clifton, while his glance still roved over the shrouded hemisphere, replied, with an indulgent smile—

"You cannot see the face of the country for the morning veil she chooses to wear. But wait till high noon, when the sun, her royal lover, in the meridian of his glory, shall raise that gauzy covering, and she, like a right royal bride, shall smile and blush in light and glory."

"By my soul, I could fancy the lady earth wore this veil to conceal fast-gathering tears, rather than smiles or blushes! *Anglice*, I think we shall have rain soon—though blistered be my tongue for saying it!—not about the rain, but about the veil! For, look you! fret as I may at this journey through the mist, yet this fine scenery, under a cloud as it literally *is*, gives me a feeling of breadth, grandeur! I expand, spread out over the vast area of its shrouded solitudes! Oh, it is only on the boundless sea or on the mountain-top, with a hemisphere below me, that I feel as if I had room enough to live in! And you give me a feeling of suffocation by drawing in this awful shrouded world to the simile of a lady's veiled face! But it is not to be wondered at. No, by the shade of Marc Antony, and all other great men who held the whole world light in the balance with a woman's evanescent smile or tear! everything is *apropos des femmes* with you now. Could the music of the spheres suddenly burst upon your astonished ears, as soon as you had recovered your senses, your highest note of admiration would be to compare that universal diapason of divine harmony to Lady Carolyn's silver laugh!"

"I do not recollect ever to have heard Lady Carolyn laugh."

"*Ten thousand pardons!* A Clifton of Clifton never laughs. But tell me, captain, whereabouts in the world—I mean, in the clouds—*are we?* And when shall we see this

pure pearl of beauty and the rich casket that enshrines her; this stately lily of the mountains and the parterre where she blooms? When shall we behold Paradise and the Peri—Clifton and Lady Carolyn?"

Without replying to this mock-poetic strain, Captain Clifton remained with his eyes still wandering from east to west, and back again over the rolling vapour. And Fairfax continued—

"I suspect, now, by your abstracted air and wandering eye, that you have lost your way in the clouds—not the first time such a thing has happened to a lover; nor would it be strange in a place like this, where the only landmarks are mountain-tops sticking out of the fog, with a day's journey between each!"

At this instant, a distant group of peaks broke suddenly through the mist like new isles thrown up by the sea, and glittered whitely in the sunlight against the deep blue horizon.

"See!" exclaimed Clifton, roused from his apathy by the sudden apparition. "Look, Fairfax! I will show you White Cliffs! Look straight before you to the western horizon—a little north of west. You see a crescent of seven peaks rising through the mist against the sky. That is White Cliffs."

"Looking white enough at this distance—quite like snow-capped mountains, in fact."

"Yes. They are of white quartz, and their peaks rising from the girdle of dark evergreens around their base and sides have quite a cooling effect in hot weather."

"Ah! just so. Now, how far off are those same blessed refrigerators?"

"About twenty-five miles in a bee-line. But the mountain-road is very circuitous, and makes the distance nearly forty. However, if we ride well, we shall be able to reach Clifton in time to surprise Mrs. Clifton at tea."

"Heaven be praised for that possibility!" ejaculated Fairfax, as they prepared to descend the mountain-side.

As they rode down, Captain Clifton, warming slightly from his cool reserve, said—

"I think, Fairfax, that you, poet and artist as you claim to be, will rather like Clifton. Tourists, who have visited our part of the country, think the scenery there very fine. It impresses *me* merely as being unique. There is something

formal—but, to myself, not therefore unpleasing—in that crescent of seven peaks; the tallest being in the centre and gradually declining thence to the lowest, which may be called the horns of the crescent, and point southward. These peaks rise from a forest of—first elms and oaks around their base; then pines farther up their sides; and last of cedars, above which rise the pinnacle of white quartz. This crescent of mountains surrounds and shelters from the north winds the family mansion, which is situated in the woods at its foot. North of the peaks the country is wild and rugged, but partly covered with thick forest, and affording the best hunting-grounds in the world. There you may course the hare; track the deer; or, if your tastes aspire to a fiercer conflict, hunt the wolf, the wild-cat, or the bear!"

"Or the rattlesnake, copper-head, or mocassin! Thank you, I have no inclination for crusade against those mountaineers," laughed Fairfax.

"Perhaps you like angling? There is a trout-stream at the foot of the wooded lawn, in front of the house. I must tell you about that, for it is the head waters of a fine river. From the western cliff there springs a torrent that, with many a leap, a fall, and rebound, tumbles tumultuously down the side of the mountain, and, falling into a channel at the foot of the lawn, flows calmly on until it meets a second fall, from whence it goes hurrying on, through forests, fields, and rocks, taking tribute from many a mountain-torrent, and many a meadow-stream, and widening as it goes, until it becomes a mighty river, rushing on to pour its floods into the majestic James. After which, they both go on, breaking through range after range of mountains, and so conquer their passage to the sea—even as in the feudal days of the olden country, some mountain chieftain, gathering his vassals together, came rushing down from his Highland home, and, laying all the country under tribute in his course, hurried on to throw all his treasures at the feet of his sovereign, and go with him to the wars."

"Clifton!" said Fairfax more seriously than he had yet spoken, "all your illustrations, all your metaphors, all your thoughts, fancies, and imaginings, are, not 'of the earth, earthy,' but—worse, far worse—of the *world, worldly!*—of the world, its castes, customs, and conventions—its pomps, vanities, and falsities! You speak of the grandest, the most

imposing—oh! let me call it at once the most magnificent—area of mountain-scenery in the hemisphere, with all the earth, below and around, covered with a sea of vapour that rises and falls, rolling from horizon to horizon like the waves of the ocean, and you compare it to a veiled royal bride! You describe a mighty mountain-river, rending its passage through the everlasting rocks, overleaping, uprooting, bearing down and bearing on all obstacles to its resistless rush towards the sea, and you liken it to a chieftain going to pay tribute to a king! Ah, Clifton of Clifton! the beauty, the glory, and the majesty of the *earth* please you; but the 'pomp, pride, and circumstance' of the *world* inspire you! But when was it otherwise with a Clifton of Clifton? 'The spirit of intense worldliness has ever been their bane and curse—their sin and its punishment!'" he concluded, relapsing into his mock-tragic air.

"Ah! so you are familiar with the popular legend that you have just quoted," said Captain Clifton. "But," he added, with a sarcastic smile, "were Georgia here, I think she could refute the charge, and prove one Clifton, at least, has been guided by any spirit rather than that of intense worldliness."

"*Georgia?*"

"I beg her pardon! Mrs. Clifton of Clifton."

"Oh, your aunt! but by my soul, captain, that was a very irreverent way of introducing the old lady! Do young men in your patriarchal part of the country call old gentlewomen by their Christian names?"

"Old gentlewomen!" repeated Clifton slowly, with a musing smile, adding, "Georgia is about seventeen years of age, and the most beautiful woman in the world!"

"Whe-e-e-ew! I'm amazed! I'm confounded! I'm stunned! Then the present Mrs. Clifton is the *second* wife?"

"No, sir. Georgia is my uncle's fourth wife."

"Overwhelmed! annihilated!" exclaimed the young man. "The—the—old Blue Beard! the old Henry VIII.! Four wives! Are they all living?—if not, where does he bury his dead?"

"*Fairfax!*" exclaimed Captain Clifton in a tone and with a look that speedily recalled the young man to himself; then he added rather haughtily, "My Uncle Clifton is a

simple, gentle-hearted old man, excessively fond of women; but mark you, sir! it is the affection of the patriarch, not of the pacha."

"Hang me if ever I saw any difference between Solomon the king, and Solimaun the caliph—Abraham the patriarch, and Aroun the pacha—in that respect," laughed the young man, until, stealing a furtive glance at the cold and haughty face of Clifton, he held out his hand, and suddenly exclaimed, "Pardon me, Clifton! or call me out! I can't help a jest, to save my soul! but I'll fight, or apologise, or render any other sort of satisfaction afterwards!"

Captain Clifton remembered that Francis Fairfax was his guest, going to spend a long midsummer furlough at his mother's house; and so he cleared his brow and answered, "Nonsense!"

"Now, tell me about Henry VIII.'s fourth queen. How long has she been married—I mean, the present Mrs. Clifton?"

"About two years. My uncle wedded her when she was fifteen—she is now seventeen, and, as I said, the most beautiful creature that you, or I, or anyone else ever did, or ever shall see, anywhere."

"*Allons*—stop there! False knight and recreant! whose colours do you wear while you uphold the peerless beauty of Georgia? What would Miss Clifton of Clifton say to your admiration?"

"Ridiculous, sir! Miss Clifton is herself very beautiful, but not the *most* beautiful. Miss Clifton has *other* and *rarer* distinctions, I am proud to say!"

"Oh, I understand—her family *name!* Nevertheless, be hanged if I don't believe you have been in love with Georgia!"

"Impossible, sir! The perfect beauty of the young girl struck me forcibly, as it strikes *all others*—nay, more, impressed my imagination deeply, perhaps. I confess to a *penchant* for female beauty; and, observe, it is the artist's taste, sir, not the sultan's. But in love with Georgia! Impossible, sir! She was a girl of humble parentage!"

"Ah! then you think it quite impossible that a gentleman born should be in love with a girl of humble parentage?"

"Preposterous, sir! utterly preposterous! Pray, let us hear no more about it!"

"Yet your uncle—"

"My uncle married such an one, you would say. Old gentlemen living on their own estates will do such things; and the world charitably ascribes it to dotage, smiles, and forgives them. You will oblige me by changing the subject, Frank."

Fairfax fell into reverie, and Clifton dropped into thought, and they rode on for some time in silence and in joy, until—

"Floods and furies! Fire and flames! Lightning, and tempests, and sudden death!" exclaimed Fairfax, rearing and backing his horse with a terrible jerk, and throwing himself from the saddle, bathed in perspiration, and shaking with terror. "Look! Look there! There at your feet! Back! Back your horse, unless you wish to ride straight to the kingdom of heaven, or—to the other place! Oh, blessed Lord! I shall never survive the shock!"

Captain Clifton backed his horse, dismounted, and, following the index of Fairfax, approached the brink of the awful abyss, and looked down a perpendicular precipice of more than a thousand feet, with the remaining distance lost in shadows and dim vapours, while faintly to the ear came a low and hollow murmur, as of the roaring of many waters at a vast depth.

"This is the head of the Devil's Staircase! We have lost our way," said Captain Clifton.

"Devil's Staircase! I should think it was! Ugh! Oo-oo-oo-ooh! I shall never survive it! Where does it lead to? Tell me that! To the infernal regions, I suppose, of course. Ur-r-r-r-r!" exclaimed Fairfax, with his teeth chattering.

"We have indeed made a very narrow escape," said Captain Clifton, gazing thoughtfully down the horrible pit.

"Narrow escape! Ur-r-r-r-r!" exclaimed Frank, shaking, shuddering, and streaming with cold perspiration. "I tell you, when I was providentially led to look down, and saw the fog roll away from beneath my horse's feet, and reveal that ghastly—Ur-r-r-r-r! Ur-r-r-r-r! I believe I shall chatter my teeth to powder!"

"Come, come, Fairfax! this is really unmanly. Thank an ever-watchful Providence, that has preserved you from a sudden and horrible death, and calm yourself. Be a man!"

"Be a man! You might as well say to my shuddering horse there, 'Be a horse! This is unhorsely!' Ur-r-r-r-r! I tell you it has given me the tertian ague!"

"Why, Frank, really!"

"Look at my horse—look even at that dumb beast! Yes look at that gallant steed, who would charge upon a phalanx of fixed bayonets, and impale himself upon their points, if spurred to it—look at him! Positively frozen with terror!"

"Fairfax, you astonish me—certainly you are not really so much overcome."

"Overcome! My nerves are shattered to atoms, I tell you! Ur-r-r-r-r! It has given me the tertian ague, and the St. Vitus' dance—both together! Ur-r-r-r-r!"

"Now, who would have supposed you to be a— of such a nervous temperament? Come, let me assist you to mount, and then away."

"What! And at the end of the next hundred yards ride headlong over a precipice of fifteen hundred feet, and before night find sepulchre in the maws of fifty turkey-buzzards! I tell you there is neither a glorious death, an honourable burial, nor an immortal fame to be found in such a fate! Heavens and earth, no! For instance—'What ever became of that poor devil, Fairfax?' asks one. 'Oh, one day, crossing the mountains in a fog, with his head in a mist, he had the awkwardness to pitch himself headforemost down the Devil's Ladder, in the Alleghanies,' answers t'other. '*Poor creature!* He was always a miserable—but where was he buried?' 'He wa'n't buried—the crows eat him up,' &c. Oh! I know what my posthumous fame would be in such a case. Quite different from that of the future Major-General Francis Fairfax, who, fifty years hence, at a good old age, shall die in his downy bed, with the archbishop praying by him, and be buried with the highest honours of war, and have a national monument raised to his fame, emblazoning his immortal services to his grateful country, in receiving her honours and emoluments for more than half a century! Can't give up that glorious future for the sake of dashing myself to pieces this afternoon, Clifton. No!" said the young man, folding his arms, and striking an attitude *à la Napoleon*, "I have a destiny to fulfil, and shall not stir from this spot until the mist rises or falls."

"Mr. Fairfax, it is now drawing late in the afternoon. We shall have a storm before night; and a storm on the mountains, let me tell you, is a much more delightful thing to read about in Childe Harold, while stretched at your ease upon the settee in your shady piazza, than to take in *propria personæ* on the Alleghanies," said Captain Clifton quietly.

"Only warrant me from bringing up suddenly to the jumping-off place before I know it, and I'll make an attempt! Yea! let him only insure my body unharmed by fire or water, and I'll valiantly follow my leader through flood and flame!" replied Frank, recovering himself with a few more shudders, and preparing to mount.

"We have left the right road about two miles behind," said Captain Clifton, turning his horse's head and leading the way.

The fog below was condensing very fast. From the north-western horizon black clouds were rising behind masses of foaming white vapour. The air was still and oppressive, and from all around came a faint, low moaning sound, as if nature cowered and trembled before the coming of the terrible "storm-king." The fog was now rolling down and gathering into clouds below them—revealing the majestic features of the landscape, mountains, vales and forests, rocks, glens, and waterfalls, in wild and magnificent confusion—all wearing now a savage and gloomy aspect under the shadow of the coming storm. Captain Clifton's eye had been constantly on the alert in hope of discovering some mountain cabin, which might shelter them from the fury of the tempest, but as yet his search was unsuccessful—no human dwelling even of the humblest description was to be seen. At length the attention of the travellers was attracted by the faint tingling of a bell, then by the bleating of sheep, and then from the deep clouded glen at their right sprang up into their path a bell-wether, followed by two—five—ten—a whole flock of sheep, and driven by a girl on a pony; a little, coarse, sun-burned girl, in a boy's coarse straw hat and a homespun gown, riding on a little, rough-coated, wiry, mountain pony.

"A shepherdess, by all that is romantic!" exclaimed Fairfax, vaulting aside to let the sheep pass. Then springing to the side of the rough-coated pony, he doffed his hat to

the rider and said, "My good girl, for the love of Providence will you tell us where we can find shelter from the storm?"

The child raised her fine eyes to the stranger's face with the look of a startled fawn, and dropped them again instantly. Fairfax repeated his question. The child stole another furtive glance at the fine gentleman in the very fine uniform, and then at her own coarse raiment, and blushed deeply. But before Fairfax could reiterate his request, she said quietly, "Grandfather's cabin is not far off, if you and the other gentleman will come with me."

"With great pleasure—and ten thousand thanks, my dear little girl. Be so good as to lead the way."

The flock of sheep had gone on before. The girl put her pony in motion, and the gentlemen followed—Mr. Fairfax addressing all his conversation to his little companion, and Captain Clifton riding on in silence and abstraction.

The sky was darkening very fast, and great single drops of rain occasionally falling. They quickened their pace, and, after riding briskly several hundred yards, came to the head of a glen, deep down in which was seen a small, lone cabin. At this instant the sheet-lightning glared from horizon to horizon, followed by a report as of exploded and falling rocks, and then the rain came down in a deluge. The darkness was so dense now as to hide their way. The girl jumped from her pony, and, giving him a little slap that sent him travelling down the path, went up to the head of Clifton's horse and said shyly—

"You can't see the way, sir, and you don't know the road—let me lead your horse."

"By no means, my good girl," replied Clifton, speakin in a tone of haughty astonishment.

Without reply, the child turned from him and went towards Fairfax. And at the same instant a thunderbolt was hurled from heaven with a terrific crash, riving the ground on which she had just stood. When the panic was over, the first thought of Captain Clifton was for the safety of that presumptuous child. A glare of lightning revealed her lying on the rock. He hastened to her side.

"My dear child, are you hurt?" he asked, dismounting and stooping to lift her.

"Oh, sir, I am so glad to hear you speak! I thought you were struck."

"Are you hurt?"

"Oh, no, sir, I was only thrown down," replied the child, lightly springing to her feet.

"Oh, yes! Exchange your mutual condolences and congratulations. But who the mischief cares whether I am hurt or not?" exclaimed Fairfax, stumbling along towards them; for he also had dismounted.

"You were entirely out of danger," replied Clifton.

"Out of danger! Who the deuce is out of danger within a hundred miles of these infernal mountains?"

The rain was still pouring down in floods, and, in the interval of the thunder, the roar of the swollen torrents was deafening. The question now was, whether to remain standing there exposed to all the fury of the storm, or to attempt the now dangerous descent into the glen.

"I could lead your horses down in safety, if you would let me, for I know every inch of the road so well," said the girl.

Another blinding glare of lightning, another terrific peal of thunder, and another deluge of rain, put a stop to all reply. At last the child repeated her offer, saying that she could lead the horses down very well, "one at a time." But, of course, that was not for a moment to be thought of by the young men; and her plan was rejected at once.

"Well, then, the only way will be to go down on foot, and leave your horses here to follow; for you will need your hands as well as your feet in groping down the slippery rock through the darkness," said the girl.

After a little more consultation, her last proposition was adopted, and they began the descent on foot.

After some twenty minutes' toil and struggle through darkness and deluge, thunder and lightning, they reached the lowly door of the cabin, pushed it hastily open, and hurried in.

It was very dark, and nothing was to be seen but the red glow of a few smouldering embers on the hearth. Towards these the girl went.

"And what do you think has become of your flock of sheep, my good girl?" inquired Frank kindly, remembering her interests while he stood there wringing the water out of his coat-skirts.

"Oh, the bell-wether has led them all into the pen long ago, sir. They are always safe when they are once in the glen," replied the child, as she lighted a candle.

The sudden glare of the light showed a rude apartment with an earth floor, log walls, and a fireplace of unhewn stone. On the right of the fireplace stood a poor bedstead, upon which lay a venerable, white-haired old man, covered with a faded counterpane; and near the bed sat an old chip-bottomed arm-chair. On the left of the fireplace were two rough plank shelves, the lower shelf adorned with a few pewter plates and mugs; the upper one filled with—books!—piles of old dingy, musty books; and near these shelves stood a spinning-wheel, with a broach of yarn on the spindle, and a basket of broaches under it. At the opposite end of the room, one corner was occupied by a little old oak table, and the other by a ladder leading up through a trapdoor into the loft overhead. A few rude stools were ranged along the walls; junks of smoked venison, ropes of onions, bunches of dried herbs, hanks of yarn, and the old man's old hat and coat, garnished the walls. All this was seen at a glance.

"Is your grandfather sick?" inquired Frank.

The girl turned her eyes wistfully towards the venerable sleeper, and did not reply

"Is your grandfather sick?" repeated Fairfax.

The child raised her eyes sorrowfully to the face of the young man, and remained silent.

"Is he so *very* sick?" earnestly reiterated Frank.

"He is not sick, sir," answered the girl in a low, sad voice.

"What is the matter with him, then?" thoughtlessly persisted Frank.

Without reply, the girl dropped her eyes, and, blushing deeply, turned away. Setting the candle down upon the table, she took a pail of water and went up the ladder and into the loft. After an absence of a few minutes, she returned, and said—

"If you will go up stairs now, you will find two suits of grandfather's and Carl's Sunday clothes. They are not fine, but they are clean and dry."

Our wet and jaded travellers thanked their young hostess, and prepared to accept her offer.

"And if," she added, "you would like to rest after so much fatigue, there is a bed."

They reached the loft, and found it a small, low place, with a little window, and a little, clean bed. On the bed

lay the two suits of homespun, and two coarse towels; and on a stool near stood a pail of water and a tin basin.

"I do believe that little girl has given us her own sanctuary. What a dear little thing she is!—so full of courage, and shyness, too! If she were two or three years older, and a great deal prettier, I could fancy myself writing poetry about her," said Frank.

Clifton made no comment. He was engaged in divesting himself of his wet garments, and thinking about—Miss Clifton.

When they had refreshed themselves by washing and changing their dress, Frank threw himself upon the bed, stretched out his limbs luxuriously, and declared that the rustic's clothes were very loose and comfortable, and his own position truly delightful. Captain Clifton walked to the window, and looked out at the storm, which was now abating.

Frank was already sound asleep.

And while Clifton stood at the window, drawing comparisons between the meanness of the hut in which he found himself and the magnificence of the mountain-scenery around it, he heard, in that small, shell-like cabin—he could not help hearing—what follows. First a heave and plunge, as if the old man below stairs had started violently from his bed and fallen again; and then a fearful, shuddering voice exclaimed, "Kate! Kate! they're coming again! They're after me, Kate! They're on me! they're on me! Save me, Kate! save me, Kate! Save—"

"Grandfather, dear grandfather," said the soothing voice of the girl, "there is no one here but me. There, there, be quiet—be still; nothing shall hurt you here—nothing can, you know."

"Look! Look, Kate! look! They're not men now, but devils!" A violent plunge, struggles, exclamations of terror and despair which the low, soothing tones and gestures of the poor girl vainly essayed to tranquillise for some time, and then silence for a few minutes, which was again interrupted by "Snakes! snakes, Kate! Snakes! *Green* snakes! See! see how they dart! They fly! They're on me! They're on me! Help! help!" and the sound of the maniac laying about him furiously. Captain Clifton started up with the intention of going to the poor girl's assistance; but by the time he reached the head of the

ladder, the voice of the child had again calmed the infuriated man.

All was quiet for a quarter of an hour, and then another violent start and throw that seemed to shake the little hut, and a horrible shriek of, "A dragon! a dragon, Kate! A green dragon belching flame!" Then a succession of violent shrieks and struggles, which aroused Frank, who, springing up in bed, exclaimed—

"What the deuce is the matter? Has the major got another fit of *mania-a-potu* on him?" Then, as all again was quiet, he rubbed his eyes and said, laughing, "I do believe I have been talking in my sleep! I dreamed we were in our mess, and the major was drunk again."

"A part of your dream was real. The old man below stairs has a fit of *mania-a-potu* upon him."

"What! and you staying here! I must go down and help the girl."

"You had better not as yet. She seems to have the power of soothing him. Your presence might, by exasperating him, do more harm than good."

At this moment another outbreak of fury from the madman caused Frank to spring to his feet, and, exclaiming, "I can't let that maniac tear my dear little hostess to pieces," rush to the head of the ladder.

"I tell you you had best not *intrude*. His mania seems perfectly harmless to the child."

But Frank was at the foot of the ladder, where, however, an impediment met him. The girl, who had just succeeded in again soothing the madman, came and stood before him, saying, "Pray do not come in, sir, just yet."

"But, my good girl, I must come in and remain to protect you," gently trying to pass her.

She stood her ground firmly; her *lips* said, "I am not in any danger. I beg you, sir, do not come in yet;" but her steady and rather threatening *glance* said, "Do not dare to look upon the old man in his degradation!"

Frank turned back, and went and perched himself at the top of the ladder to watch over the safety of the girl, and be ready in case of exigency.

He saw the old man lying, clutching the cover around him, while his terror-dilated eyes glared out like a wild beast's from its lair—all ready for another start and spring!

He saw the girl mix a mug of strong vinegar and water, and take it to him, and the old man grasp and quaff it with fiery thirst; three times she filled the mug, and three times he gulped its contents with voracity. Then she laid his aged head tenderly down, and went and saturated a cloth with vinegar, and placed it about his burning forehead and temples. Next she took a rustic fan of turkey feathers, and stood by him and fanned him until he fell into a sleep that every moment became deeper and deeper. Finally, she gently laid down the fan, sunk upon her knees by the bedside, and bowed her head upon her clasped hands in silent prayer. At last she arose, pressed a light kiss upon the furrowed brow of the sleeper, and silently went about her household work.

From a shed at the back of the house she brought wood and water, made up the fire, filled and hung on the tea-kettle, set an oven and oven-lid to heat, and again disappeared through the back door into the shed. In about fifteen minutes she returned with a tray of dough and a pan of venison steaks. She made her dough into a loaf and put it in the oven to bake, and prepared her venison steaks to lay upon the coals. She set her table with milk, and cream, and butter, brought in, doubtless, from a rude but cool spring-house, near at hand.

When all was done, she sat down to knit, seeming to wait the coming of another; for she often paused and listened with her head turned towards the door, and at length got up and drew from under the bed a trunk, whence she took an old, well-patched but clean suit of homespun clothes, with a shirt and a pair of socks, and hung them over a chair.

Soon after a step was heard without—the door was thrown open, and a thin, dark young man, dressed as a farm-labourer, entered. Throwing his coarse hat to the other end of the room, he approached the fire, when seeing the situation of the old man he stopped short, and, placing his arms akimbo, gazed on him, exclaiming, "Drunk again, by——!" and then turned with an interrogative look towards the girl.

A short wave of the hand, a quick, distressful nod, and the choking down of a sob, told him that it was so.

The young man let down his arms, and with a frown of mingled sorrow and anger approached and gazed upon the sleeper.

"Have you had much trouble with him, dear Kate?"

The same choking sob and quick nod answered him.

"*Where* DID he get the liquor? What has he laid his hands on and sold now?—any of my books?"

"No! no! It was my bonnet; but never mind, I can wear your old hat, you know! It doesn't matter for me!"

"Well, now, by all that's—"

"Hush, hush, Carl! don't swear! He is our grandfather, you know; and besides," she added, suddenly dropping her voice, "there are strangers up stairs."

"Strangers! What strangers?"

"Two gentlemen who came in here out of the storm."

"Umph!" said the young man, dropping himself into the arm-chair, and falling into deep thought, from which he was aroused by the voice of Kate, saying—

"Carl, don't sit down in your wet clothes; take those on the chair, and go in the shed and put them on. And make haste, please, Carl, because supper is nearly ready, and the gentlemen up stairs must be hungry."

The young man arose, with a heavy sigh, saying, "I'll only change my jacket; that I can do here. O Kate!" he continued, as he divested himself of his wet jacket, and drew on the other, "O Kate! what between one thing and another, this is no home for you! *Indeed, indeed*, every morning I go away from you with a heavy heart, and all day long I can hardly work for the dread that's on my mind about you. If I could only find a place for you to wait on some lady, or to nurse a baby—but, Lord! what with the niggers, there is never a place to be got here for a poor white girl."

"O Carl! if you could get me the best place in the world—even a place to sew—I wouldn't leave *him*. Why, Carl, it would break his heart. He would grieve himself to death!"

"And better for him that he should be dead! And better for you and all concerned!"

"Oh, don't say so, Carl! Don't say so! Come and look at him, and let the sight soften your heart to him," said the girl, taking the youth's hand, and drawing him to the bedside. Look, now, at that poor old wrinkled face—it has not got very long to live, anyhow; and see the two or three thin white hairs on his temples—and see the poor, *poor* withered hands—so helpless! Oh! I think it is all so pitiful And

now see, he is asleep; but how much trouble there is on his poor old face. No, no! don't say hard things of him; it cuts me to the heart! And, Carl, no matter how bad his fit may be, he never offers to hurt me or anything else. Only terror and horror is all that is on him! He is a gentle, harmless, poor old man. And I always pity him like I pity anyone very ill."

"Kate! I daresay you think this is all tender-heartedness, and you give yourself a great deal of credit for it; but I tell you it's nothing but weakness. And it may be the ruin of you, too, before long. And now I tell you, I'm going to get a place for you, if I can. Yes, and make you go to it, too. I can do without you—that is, I *must* do without you! I can get the breakfast before I go away in the morning; and I can leave something for the old man's dinner, and come home time enough in the evening to get his supper. And to-morrow I am going down to the turnpike-gate to thrash Scroggings, and bring your bonnet home. And I'll tell him if he ever lets the old man have any more liquor, I'll kick him round his groggery till he hasn't got a whole bone left in his body. Yes, and I'll do it, too!"

Kate was placing the supper on the table; but she turned, with the same expression of countenance with which she had stopped Fairfax at the foot of the stairs, and said, "I should be very sorry for any violence from you, Carl. But of one thing be sure—do what you may, I will never, *never* leave our grandfather!"

"There, now, whenever you get that hateful Maria Theresa look, I *hate* you, Katterin! I hate to see strength in women! It don't belong to them, nor grace them, anyhow."

"Strength of *affection* does, Carl. But now please call the gentlemen down to supper," said Kate.

Carl rapped at the foot of the ladder, and summoned the travellers accordingly.

Now, though Fairfax had honourably withdrawn from the trapdoor the moment he found that his services would not be required, and that the conversation between Kate and Carl was growing confidential, yet every word of that conversation had been distinctly heard by both young men, and had produced an effect upon both. Frank with difficulty withheld himself from exclaiming aloud, as pity, disgust, anger, or approbation moved him in turn. Captain

Clifton, far less impressible, and more reserved than his companion, had remained perfectly quiet and silent, though his thoughts were more practically busy with the case than those of his companion. They went down, and were received at the foot of the ladder by Carl, who, with a sort of rough politeness, placed stools at the table, and invited them to be seated. They placed themselves at the board, at the head of which Kate already presided, with folded hands and downcast eyes. Then, to their utter astonishment, the rude, irreverent young man, Carl, stood up and asked a blessing, saying afterwards that he was no parson, nor no Methodist, but Kate would have it so, and he thought it was best, upon the whole, not to oppose females in such notions; and then he began to wait upon his guests.

Their supper consisted of good coffee, with cream and maple sugar; good bread, with fresh butter and cheese; venison steak, and broiled chickens; and, lastly, of a dish of baked pears, cold, and a pitcher of milk. Frank was surprised to find such excellence of fare amid the ragged poverty of the mountain cabin; but, on afterwards expressing this surprise to Captain Clifton, he was told by the latter that such contrasts were by no means rare. Mr. Fairfax applied himself with zeal to the good things before him, until the sharpness of his appetite was sated, and then lingered long over the meal, conversing with his host upon the state of the country in his region, the climate and soil, productions, market, &c., and receiving from the young mountaineer the information that there was no great amount of produce about there, except in the glens, grazing for the cattle; and that the roads were so bad, and the towns and villages so distant, that nothing was raised for market except such kind of produce as could walk thither—to wit, flocks and herds. That his grandfather, before the infirmities of age had come upon him, had raised herds of kine and hogs, which he drove fifty miles to market every year; but that was some years ago, when he himself was a child. That now they only had a few sheep, which his sister tended while he was at work on a plantation at the foot of the mountain. In reply to a question Frank put while leisurely using his gold toothpick, the young man informed him farther that himself and his sister were of German and Irish descent; that the old man, their grandfather, was a German by birth, but had lived

nearly seventy years in America; that his name was Carl Wetzel, and his only daughter, Caterina, had been married to an Irish emigrant of the name of Kavanagh; that *they* were the parents of himself and sister; finally, that they had been dead nearly seven years. It was farther ascertained that old Carl Wetzel had been a man of considerable education; and it was easily seen that Carl Kavanagh had inherited much of his father's Irish quickness of intelligence, and much of his grandfather's German love of knowledge.

Frank, on his part, was equally communicative, and, in spite of the haughty reserve of Captain Clifton, informed his host that he had come up in that neighbourhood for the purpose of acting as groomsman at the approaching marriage of his friend, Captain Clifton, of the —— regiment of Cavalry, to his cousin, Miss Carolyn Gower Clifton, of Clifton Place; that their journey, so far, had been rather disastrous; that they had set out from Washington city on horseback, but had become so fatigued by the excessive heat that they had been obliged, on arriving at Winchester, to take places for themselves in the stage for Staunton, and to hire a man to bring their horses after them—riding one and leading the other, and so alternately; that before reaching Staunton they had been thrown from the stage—without serious injury to themselves, however—and had been obliged to walk some ten miles to a village on their route, and wait the arrival of their horses, which, fortunately, were not many hours behind them; that they had ridden all day in a thick fog, lost their way, came near going over a fearful precipice, and finally got caught in the tempest that drove them for shelter to the cabin.

During all this time, Captain Clifton had seemed lost in thought, and only once spoke to inquire of the young mountaineer whether it were possible for them to pursue their journey that night. To this the young man replied that it would be impossible, even if it were then daylight, inasmuch as the torrents were swollen so greatly. And at the thought of pursuing their journey a pang of remorse for his forgetfulness of his horses shot through the breast of Frank, and, "What the devil can have become of Saladin?" he exclaimed, starting up.

"Oh, he is safe," answered Clifton. "I saw them both in the shed as I looked from the little window up stairs."

"Who put them there?"

"I tended them," answered the girl quietly.

They all now arose from the table. The girl cleared the board, and carried all the things out to wash up. Carl begged his guests to excuse him, and went out to give the horses a rub down and another feed.

Captain Clifton threw himself into the arm-chair, crossed his legs, took out his tablets, and began to make memorandums.

Frank impertinently peeped over his shoulder, and read "Mem. Ask my mother if she can take a little girl as a companion." Clifton closed the book instantly, in silent rebuke of Frank's impudence. And Frank himself walked about fidgety and unhappy for not knowing what to do with himself, until, at a restless movement of the old man, he went and poured out a mug of water, and, carefully keeping behind the eye of the patient, lifted up his head and gave him drink, and, after setting down the empty mug, fanned him till he went sound asleep again.

The brother and sister soon returned. Carl sat down and began his best efforts at entertainment. But Frank, who amused himself by seeing everything, saw Kate go up stairs into the loft and bring down and carry out his own and his friend's regimentals.

After which she came in, and, drawing a stool to the table, sat down and began to knit, as quietly, as silently as if no strangers were in her hut.

Carl took down and laid upon the table a rough draught-board, and invited his guests to play with each other.

Frank eagerly caught at the opportunity, but Captain Clifton declined, on the plea of distaste to the amusement.

"Play with me, my dear fellow, for pity sake," said Frank to Carl, "and don't mind my friend there! You see, he doesn't want to play, neither does he want to talk, nor to do anything but sit and think about Miss Clifton."

"Do play with him, and keep him quiet, if you can, my good youth," said Captain Clifton, turning his chair slightly aside from the table, so that his face was in the shade. Opposite to him, at the other corner of the table, sat Katherine, with the light shining full upon her face and head, as she bowed it over her work. Captain Clifton did not fall into a brown study, he fell into a study of the brown girl,

Let no one presume to misinterpret him. It was not likely that a man of twenty-five should fall in love with a girl of fourteen. Dotards do such things, not men. Then it was utterly preposterous to suppose that Archer Clifton of Clifton, Captain in the —— regiment of Cavalry, the fastidious amateur in female beauty, should be smitten with a hard-featured, sun-burned girl, in a coarse, homespun frock; that the all-accomplished scholar should be charmed with the little ignoramus; that the arrogant conservative of rank should condescend to a low-born mountaineer; or that the expectant bridegroom of the beautiful and haughty Carolyn Clifton of Clifton should wish to marry a girl who united all these repulsive qualities of ignorance, ruggedness, and low-birth. Yet if he could have looked only two short years into the future!

But Clifton was a physiognomist, and liked to study a novel individuality. A new and very curious subject was before him now. At first, he had seen in Kate nothing more than a coarse-featured, dark-skinned country girl. Now, as he sat and watched her at her quiet work, with her countenance in the repose of thoughtfulness, he saw that her features, though certainly not beautiful or classical, were even of a higher order of physiognomy, combining the rarest elements of power and goodness. The broad and massive forehead, straight nose, and square, firm jaws, were the strong and ugly features—the rugged frame-work, as it were, of her countenance, and indicated great force of character. But her hair, eyes, and lips were beautiful. Her hair, of rich dark brown, with golden lights, rippled around her forehead, shading and softening its stern strength. Her eyes, large and shadowy, with drooping lashes, and her lips sweetly curved, full, and pensively closed, suggested a profound depth of tenderness. Indeed, the brooding brow, the downcast eyes, and the compressed lips, seemed to be habitual with her, and gave her countenance an expression of grief and care beyond her years, and of thought and intellect above her station. As Clifton sat and studied her, he thought—not of

> Full many a flower that's born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air;

for the girl did not resemble a flower so much as a hardy pine-sapling of her native mountains. No; that look,

strength, intellect, and self-balance—in a word, that look of POWER—suggested rather, *girl* as she was—

> Some village Hampden who, with dauntless breast,
> The petty tyrant of the fields withstood—
> Some mute inglorious Milton . . . .
> Some CROMWELL guiltless of his country's blood.

It *was* a Maria Theresa face, without the wickedness.

Captain Clifton's physiognomical studies were interrupted by the abrupt starting of Frank, who exclaimed vehemently, "Beaten in four games! Now, that's what I call outrageous! Don't you know, my dear fellow, that there are three persons in the world who should never be beaten—a guest, a woman, and a monarch?"

Carl laughed and chuckled, and, beating the draught-board tambourine-like above his head in triumph, carried it off and put it away.

The whole party then arose to retire. Carl took the candle and showed his guests up into the loft, and left them to repose.

"Now, where will that child sleep, for we have got her room?" asked Frank, with concern, as soon as they were alone.

"Oh-h!" replied Captain Clifton indifferently, "anywhere—on a pallet, perhaps, down stairs."

"But the old man and the young one—"

"Oh-h!" again drawled Clifton in a bored tone, "if you expect to meet with refinement among the mountain people, you will be disappointed."

Long after the travellers had laid down to rest, they heard the sound of footsteps moving about in the room below. They moved quietly and cautiously, as if fearful of disturbing the guests; but, as I said before, all sounds, even the lowest, could be distinctly heard through that shell of a house.

On awaking the next morning, the young men found their own clothes well cleaned, dried, and pressed, ready for them to put on.

"Ah, ha!" said the sagacious Frank, "that is what the poor girl was at work at so late last night."

On going down stairs, they found the lower room neatly arranged, and breakfast ready for them—hot coffee, corn-pone, hot rolls, rashers of fried bacon, eggs, potatoes, &c.

And there, in the arm-chair, in a clean homespun suit, sat the old man, looking as calm, as self-possessed, as noble and venerable as a Roman senator. He arose and bowed to the gentlemen, and offered his chair to one of them.

No wonder it bowed the young girl's head with grief and shame, it pained and humbled even these strangers to know that this most reverend white-haired patriarch was often transformed by drunkenness into the beast! It was a disease, Kate had often said, wringing her hands with anguish, while seeing his degradation.

It *was* a disease; and never till vice is treated as such will an effectual remedy be applied.

Immediately after breakfast the gentlemen took leave of the family, and mounted their horses to pursue their journey. Frank, in the thoughtless kindness of his heart, would have offered the poor people some remuneration for their entertainment; but Clifton, who knew the habits and feelings of the mountaineers better, arrested a purpose that might have given offence. But on parting with Carl Kavanagh, Captain Clifton expressed his thanks for the hospitality that had been extended to himself and friend, adding that if he could then, or at any time, in any manner, be of use to his kind host, he should be happy to serve him, &c. To this the young man replied—

"I thank you, sir. I know Captain Clifton by report, and feel that I can trust to his generosity. I have a heavy care—my young sister. If you could hear of a place at service for her among the honourable ladies of your family or acquaintance, I should feel very grateful indeed, sir."

Captain Clifton kindly gave his promise to make inquiries. Frank again shook hands with Carl, bowed to Kate, nodded to the old man through the window, and then the travellers turned from the door of the mountain-hut, cantered briskly up the glen, and took the road to WHITE CLIFFS.

CHAPTER II.

CLIFTON AND THE BEAUTIES.

THE torrents had been so terribly swollen and overflowed, and the roads so dreadfully washed and guttered by the tempest and flood of the preceding evening, that the travellers

found the greatest difficulty in pursuing their journey, often having to turn back miles on this road to take another way, and often being obliged to search leagues up and down the course of a river to find a practicable ford.

Therefore it was near nightfall when they crossed the last range of forest-crowned mountains, and descended into the wooded valley that lay between them and White Cliffs. A winding road through the woods brought them to the house. The full moon was rising east of the cliffs, and casting their shadow back across the house and lawn. The mansion was a lofty edifice of white stone, with terraced roof, and many irregular, projecting wings. The tall trees surrounding the buildings, the lofty cliffs rising behind them, the dark shadow falling on all; the hour, the silence, and the solitude, gave an air of refreshing coolness and deep repose to the scene. On turning an angle of the building, they saw the drawing-room windows open, and the light from them gleaming out cheerfully across that part of the lawn. At that moment a servant, waiting at the hall-door, came down to take their horses.

"All well at home, Dandy?" inquired Captain Clifton, as he dismounted, and threw him the reins.

"Sarvint, sir! All very well," replied the man, touching his hat.

Captain Clifton led the way up into the hall adjoining the drawing-room, where they were met by an old gentleman, who seized both of Clifton's hands, and shook them slowly and cordially, as he said, dropping each word separately, with a hearty, luscious emphasis—

"Why—my—dear—boy—how glad I am—to see you!"

"And I am very happy to be with you, sir, and to find you looking so well. Allow me to introduce to your acquaintance Lieutenant Fairfax, of my company," said Captain Clifton, presenting his friend.

"Glad to see him! Glad to see Mr. Fairfax! Glad to welcome any friend of my nephew's to Clifton. How do you do, sir? Knew your relative, Lord Fairfax, of Greenway Courthouse. Excessively fond of hunting. Kept bachelor's hall. Very great mistake, that—very! Hope you won't follow his example! Fine man, however, and I honour his memory. Come in, sir; come in. Come in, Archy. My—dear—boy—I'm—so—del—*ighted* to see you!"

Whenever he spoke to his nephew, he seemed to dwell upon each separate syllable with a cordiality impossible to describe.

He was a large old gentleman, clothed in a fresh, fragrant suit of pale blue linen, with his hair as white as cotton, his fresh, rosy complexion, fine teeth, and clear, kind, blue eyes, making a most refreshing picture of simplicity, cheerfulness, and cleanliness of soul and body in old age. He was of a sanguine temperament, and, under great provocation, could get into a passion, too. And what old father of a family, with two grown daughters and a young wife, all under eighteen years of age, and all beauties, has *not* enough combustible material to burn the house down, or set his own temper on fire? Yet such was the kindness of his heart, that even when in violent anger, stamping up and down the floor, grasping desperately at his own white temple locks with both hands, and vociferating in stentorian tones, it was all, as Frank afterwards said, *shooting with blank cartridges* —he never said a word or did a thing to wound a single soul.

"I trust the ladies are all well, sir," said Captain Clifton, as he followed his uncle.

"Yes, yes; that is to say, *Carry* is well, but not well *pleased*. She expected you yesterday—didn't consider the storm any excuse for your absence. Ah! you dog—you sad dog—at your age would *I* have kept a lady waiting? Nay, would I do it *now?* But come, shall I present you to the ladies now, or do you prefer first the refreshment of the bath and a change of dress? Your own and your friend's baggage arrived this morning by the waggon, and has been conveyed to your rooms."

"Oh, a change of dress, by all means!" suggested Frank.

"Dandy, DANDY!" exclaimed the old gentleman, raising his strong voice, till the servant appeared, "show Mr. Fairfax to General Washington's room."

General Washington had slept one night at Clifton, and from that time to this the room he occupied has been "General Washington's room."

The servant conducted Mr. Fairfax up stairs. And then the old gentleman, turning to his nephew, took his hands again, and said, "My dear boy, once more I must say, I'm —so—*glad*—to—see you. *You* are at home, you know. So

go and find your room, and ring and give your orders, *my son*, for you are so. And I will go and let the ladies know that you have come, though I dare say they know it already." And, shaking his hands, he let them go, and turned slowly away.

Half an hour sufficed the young gentlemen to make themselves presentable, at the end of which time they descended the stairs, and were met in the hall by old Mr. Clifton, who ushered them into the drawing-room.

This apartment was a most delightful summer-room. It was very spacious, occupying the whole first floor of one of those irregular wings of the house. The ceiling was lofty, the walls were covered with pearl-white paper, and the floor, of white oak, was waxed and polished to an ivory smoothness. On three sides were tall windows, reaching to the floor, and opening out upon the piazza or the lawn, and draped with snowy, flowing curtains. On the fourth side was the open fireplace, whitened inside, and having on its marble hearth an alabaster vase of lilies, whose fragrance filled the air. The walls were adorned with tall mirrors, and with choice paintings, all of a cool, refrigerating character, such as: An Alpine Scene; A Green Forest Glade, with Deer Reposing; A Mountain Lake; A Shaded Pond, with Cows; A Farmyard in a Snow-storm, &c. A piano stood at the farthest end of the room. A harp reclined near it. A few marble-topped stands and tables, scattered over with rare prints, books, *virtu*, *bijouterie*, &c., stood at convenient distances. A lady's elegant work-table, with its costly trifles, was a pleasing feature in the room. Sofas, ottomans, divans, and lounging chairs, "fitted to a wish for study or repose," were everywhere at hand.

Through the open windows came the evening wind, laden with the fragrance of flowers, the murmur of falling waters, the whisper of leaves, and the cherry chirp of insects—those night songsters who begin when the birds go to sleep, nature's vesper choir; while *from* the open windows could be darkly seen the tall, shadowy trees, the towering white cliffs, and, in the distance, a bend of that great river which took its rise here, and which there, sleeping among the dark green hills, with the moon shining full upon it, seemed a resplendent mountain lake, flashing back the moonbeams from its bosom in rays of dazzling light. The whole effect of the room and the scene was delightfully cooling and refreshing.

When Mr. Clifton conducted his guests into this saloon, it was occupied by three young ladies, who, immediately on their entrance, arose to receive them; and whom, in presenting his visitors, Mr. Clifton severally named as, "My wife, Mrs. Clifton; my daughter, Miss Clifton; and my second daughter, Zuleime." Captain Clifton, in turn, saluted his aunt and cousins. Miss Clifton, his betrothed, received him with cold hauteur.

So these were the beauties—and beautiful, passing beautiful, they were indeed, though differing from each other in beauty, as "one star differs from another in glory." But let me describe them.

Carolyn Clifton is tall and elegantly proportioned, and moves with high-bred dignity. Her features are Grecian—her complexion is dazzlingly fair, save when the pure rich blood mantles in her cheek, and crimsons the short and scornful lip. Her eyes are blue, and half veiled by their fair lashes, as in disdain of aught that might seek their glance. Her fair hair is carried up from her forehead, and falls in bright tendril-like curls around the back of her neck, lending an intellectual and queenly grace to the proud head. The costume of that day closely resembled the prevailing mode of our own. Miss Clifton wore a dress of pale blue silk, made low in the neck, with a long-waisted stomacher, tight sleeves reaching to the elbows, and ample flowing skirt. The neck was trimmed with a fall of deep lace, then called a "tucker," and answering to the present *berthe*. The tight half-sleeves were trimmed at the elbows by deep lace ruffles, shading the arm. A necklace of large strung pearls around her throat, a bracelet of the same on her arm, and a pearl-headed pin run through the Grecian knot of ringlets at the back of her head, completed her toilet. She carried in her hand and toyed carelessly with a beautiful fan of marabout feathers. She was the daughter of the *first* Mrs. Clifton of Clifton, a fair, proud Maryland lady, one of the haughty Gowers, who lived long enough to augment, by precept and example, the double portion of family arrogance Carolyn Clifton had inherited from both sides of her house. Miss Clifton had "received her education" at a first-class "Ladies' Institute" at Richmond.

Zuleime, the younger sister, was about fourteen years of age, but well-grown and full-formed for her years. She was

the daughter of the second Mrs. Clifton, a beautiful West Indian Creole, who died in giving her life. She had the snowy skin and damask cheek of her father's fair race, and the glittering black hair and sparkling black eyes of her Creole mother. Her dress was of plain white muslin, with short sleeves and low neck, and coral necklace, which well set off the exceeding brilliancy of her complexion. Zuleime was home for the midsummer holidays.

Mrs. Clifton of Clifton, Georgia!

"Yes, she is indeed the most beautiful woman in the whole world!" exclaimed Fairfax to himself, as he turned from the fair and dignified Carolyn, the brilliant and sparkling Zuleime, to the dark and graceful Georgia. She is of medium height. Her complexion is a rich, dark, uniform olive, her very cheeks being of the same hue, but so transparently clear that that which would mar the perfection of another face adds deeper beauty to hers. Yes; the delicate bloom of the fair Carolyn, and the bright damask blush of the brilliant Zuleime, seem commonplace beside the perfect beauty of the pure, clear olive cheek of the dark Georgia. Her hair is intensely black, with depths under depths of darkness lurking in the labyrinths of irregular curls that cluster around, and throw so deep a shadow over her witching face. Her eyebrows are black and arched. Her eyelashes are long, black, and drooping. Her eyes are—pause—I have been trying to think of something to which her wondrous eyes may be compared for darkness, profundity, and power. Midnight?—no, her eyes are darker, stiller, and more solemn yet. Thunder-clouds?—no, for her eyes are more stormy and impending still, and their electric stroke is silent as it is fatal. In short, her eyes resemble nothing but themselves. Her dress is of black gauze, over black silk, made high to veil her neck, and finished with a narrow black lace, within which gleams around her throat a necklace of jet and gold. She wears no other jewellery. A large black lace mantilla is carelessly thrown over all. When she moves, her every movement is undulating grace—her motion might be set to music. And when she sits still, she is *so* still, and dark, and beautiful, *and something else besides*, that the gazer experiences something like the fascination and terror one feels in looking down the depths of a dark chasm.

She was the daughter of a portrait-painter in Richmond

and this was what Captain Archer Clifton, in his arrogance, called humble parentage. Mr. Clifton had met her under the following circumstances: On finally withdrawing his eldest daughter from school, he wished, before carrying her home, to have her portrait taken, and went for that purpose to the studio of Mr. Fuller, portrait and miniature painter, where he chanced to see her for the first time, the artist's beautiful child, Georgia. He took so strong a fancy to this bewitching creature, that he delayed his departure—prolonging his stay in the city for three weeks, at the end of which, besides the accomplished Miss Clifton, with her elegant wardrobe, splendid jewels, costly presents, and finished portrait, he took home the artist's daughter as the fourth Mrs. Clifton of Clifton, much to the indignation of the haughty Carolyn, who never ceased to treat her beautiful young stepmother with scorn and contempt.

Supper was announced; and the old gentleman, rising, requested his nephew to lead in his wife, while he himself took the arm of his eldest daughter, and left Zuleime to Mr. Fairfax. They crossed the hall and entered a large and pleasant dining-room, where stood an elegant table, laid with a damask tablecloth, set out with silver plate and Sèvres porcelain, and laden "with all the luxuries of the season." Waiters of perfect dress and *ad*dress were in attendance.

"I assure you, Miss Zuleime, that contrast is all the seasoning of existence; and *this* is a high seasoning. For yesterday we sat down to eat supper off of pewter plates, on a bare board, in a mean hut, in company with rude mountaineers, and to-night we sit at the elegant tea-table of Clifton, surrounded with beautiful, refined, and accomplished ladies," said Frank, as he handed his lively companion into her chair, and took the seat by her side.

The sprightly Zuleime laughed, and said she doubted whether he would find more substantial or savoury fare here than he got at the mountain hut.

After all were seated, and all served, the conversation became general and vivacious—old Mr. Clifton being evidently "the life of the company." He chatted, jested, laughed, told anecdotes, and finally inspired Frank, who gave a laughable description of their adventures on the Alleghanies; of being upset in the stage-coach and pitched into Wolf's Lick; of being lost in the fog, and near going down the Devil's

Staircase; finally, of being caught in the tempest, and shut up in a mountain hut with a raving maniac. At this the old gentleman began to rally his proud daughter on her gratuitous ill-humour of the preceding evening at the said delay, and then to scold the young men for their effeminacy and want of gallantry and courage in suffering themselves to be delayed by the storm. Now, to be charged, all at once, with effeminacy, and want of gallantry, and courage, even in jest, was too much, and, in Frank's case, too near the truth to go without reply. So he began vehemently to clear his fame, assuring the assembled company that it was *not* altogether effeminacy, for that they had been hospitably sheltered in the cabin of a beautiful shepherdess.

"Yes," said Frank maliciously, "*so* beautiful that *Clifton* there couldn't keep his eyes off her; and while I sat and played checkers with her brother, he sat and studied her face, 'an it were a book,' *for hours*. I wish you had seen him, Miss Clifton—

> Never gazed the moon
> Upon the water, as he sat and read,
> As 'twere, her eyes.

Fact, my dear lady; and I should be guilty of misprision of treason to conceal it!" laughed Frank, shaking his head at his friend.

"Ah-h-h! H-a-a-ah! are you *there*, my fine fellow?" chuckled the old gentleman, gleefully rubbing his hands, and pointing his finger at his nephew, greatly enjoying his discomfiture.

"I assure you, sir," began Captain Clifton gravely.

"Oh! don't assure *me!* don't assure *me!* Assure Carolyn! What d'ye think o' that, Carolyn? What d'ye think o' that? More cause for ill-humour last night than ye thought, eh? What think o' that?" he continued mercilessly.

And Carolyn—

> Oh, what a world of scorn looked beautiful
> In the contempt and anger of her lip!

There are some women who cannot bear jest upon such subjects—who cannot tolerate that their lovers should look with common curiosity, far less gaze with interest or admiration "for hours," upon any other young female face. And

such a woman was Carolyn Gower Clifton. Captain Clifton knew this, and, adoring her above all things, silently wished Frank and the mountain girl both at the bottom of the Devil's Staircase.

The old gentleman chatted and laughed; Frank jested and blundered; the sprightly Zuleime sparkled and overflowed with fun and frolic, and the meal went on merrily notwithstanding.

When supper was over, they adjourned to the airy summer drawing-room, where they distributed themselves according to their several humours. Miss Clifton passed imperiously down the room, and took her seat upon a distant divan. Captain Clifton followed, with a troubled air, and sat down on the low ottoman at her feet. They doubtless thought—if they thought at all—that they were in a very obscure nook; but Frank had the impertinence to see them. There sat the haughty and scornful girl, with chin erect, lip curled, and eyelids cast down in disdain upon her suppliant; and there sat Archer Clifton, with his high, proud face turned up to hers, with an earnest, pleading, passionate gaze!

"Now, by the venom of Cupid's shaft!" exclaimed Frank to himself, "I cannot see what Clifton finds to worship in that arrogant girl. If it were this bright, warm Zuleime here, now! But *her!* I might really suspect *him* of being a fortune-hunter, and *her* of being an heiress, if I didn't know that Archer Clifton is himself the heir of the entailed estate of Clifton, and that, if his uncle were to die to-night, he might, if he pleased, turn all these penniless women out of the house to-morrow! Can't understand it, for my life! But I suppose the bond of sympathy between them is their name and their pride!"

"Do you find talking to yourself a very amusing pastime, Mr. Fairfax?" asked Zuleime, touching him on the elbow.

"No, my dear, delightful little girl, I don't! What a delightful thing, in a country-house, is a beautiful girl of fourteen, home for the holidays—a black-eyed, red-lipped girl, in a white muslin gown and a coral necklace!"

"Are your soliloquies as good-natured as your conversation, Mr. Fairfax?" inquired the laughing Zuleime.

"Not quite, I'm afraid, my dear."

"Do you know how to play chess, Mr. Fairfax?" she asked, opening the chess-board.

"I know how to play *anything* you wish me to play, my love—even the fool!"

"*Oh!* the latter is not so rare or difficult an accomplishment," laughed the maiden, taking her seat, and beginning to arrange the chess-men. Frank sat down, and they commenced the game in earnest.

All this time the old gentleman, with his white head and rosy face, and kind smile and glance, had been walking leisurely up and down the floor slowly, rubbing his hands with an air of great enjoyment—pausing now by the work-table at which sat his beautiful wife, and gazing on her fondly while he toyed with the elegant trifles of her work-box—then sauntering off towards the chess-table, and patting the head of his "little black-headed darling"—as he called Zuleime—or passing a jest with Frank as he overlooked the game, until the boy came from the post-office somewhat late; when, taking the paper, he went and ensconced himself in an easy-chair on the opposite side of his wife's work-table, and was soon busied in the perusal of the debate on Mr. Jefferson's bill for cutting off entails. Frank felt very much pleased that the old boy, as he mentally called him, was quieted at last, and that he himself had at length an opportunity of initiating his charming companion into the mysteries of flirtation, while she imparted to him the secrets of chess.

The room was now very quiet. And Frank was soon deeply immersed in his game. Yes, the room was very quiet; it seemed the sanctuary of domestic love and happiness! At one extremity sat the betrothed lovers, conversing in a low tone, softer than the hum of far-off bees. At the other extremity sat the graceful young wife, placidly pursuing her quiet work, and seeming more like the darling spoiled child of the old man, her husband, who sat reading by her side, and whose kind eyes often wandered from the paper and rested fondly upon her. About midway of the room sat Frank and his bright companion, too deeply interested in their chess to notice the happy lovers, or to observe the quiet contentment of the old man with his beautiful darling. Yes, this room seemed a temple of domestic truth and trust—of family peace and joy. At least so thought Frank, until, raising his eyes from his game, his glance chanced to fall for an instant upon the face of Mrs. Clifton.

It might have been the darkness of her surroundings

which threw into such strong relief that fearful countenance, for the black dress and flowing black mantilla veiled all her form, while the clustering deep black curls darkly shaded her face. Her form was turned from the table and bent over the arm of the chair—her bosom was heaving, her lips apart and humid, her nostrils slightly distended, and her eyes, those dreadful eyes, fixed with a passionate, fierce, devouring gaze upon some distant object.

Frank impulsively followed the direction of that consuming gaze, to where the betrothed lovers sat fully reconciled. Clifton, unconscious of all eyes but those blue orbs that smiled so graciously upon him, was pressing Carolyn's hand to his lips in an extasy of love and gratitude. Frank turned again to Mrs. Clifton. Her countenance had changed as by the passage of a thunder-cloud. Her bosom was still as death. Her brow and cheek were darkened, her teeth and lips clenched together, her eyes fixed upon the lovers with the baleful glare of a demon. If the head of the fabled Medusa had suddenly met his astonished gaze, he could not have felt a deeper thrill of horror. And yet it was only a look—the look of an instant—it came and went like the swift swooping past of a fiend's wing, but the shadow on all things seemed to remain. No more did that room seem the blessed retreat of household faith and love—no! a deadly serpent lay coiled among its flowers—a deadly poison lurked in its cup of joy—the shadow of a demon's wing was brooding in the air—the house was CURSED!

Frank was of a highly honourable nature, but, nervous and impressible, he could no longer confine his attention to the game; he misplayed—awkwardly, ridiculously. Zuleime laughed at him; and her silver laughter struck almost unpleasantly upon his ear. He lost the game; and finally, complimenting his young antagonist upon the excellence of her own play—an excellence which he admitted he had not fully brought out—Frank arose from the table and sauntered out into the piazza, exclaiming inwardly, "Ugh! I believe in Satan, since I've seen that woman! Ugh! Whe-ew! Every time I think of her I shall feel hot and smell brimstone!" I said that Frank was of an extremely impressible nature. He stood now upon the piazza at the back of the house, and the majestic crescent of cliffs was before him. The quiet of the night, the freshness of the dew, the coolness

of the breeze, the beauty and sublimity of the mountains rising from their girdle of forest, with their peaks bathed in moonlight—the distant glimpse of the bend in the river, where it lay like a silver lake among the hills—the divine peace and holiness of nature fell soothingly, refreshingly upon his excited nerves; and, after sauntering up and down the piazza for some twenty minutes, he returned to the parlour in a happier mood. There he found the family grouped around the table, on which sat a silver basket of pine-apples, with cut-glass plates, and silver fruit-knives and napkins.

"Come, Mr. Fairfax, my dear fellow, we are waiting for you," said the old gentleman, beckoning him.

Frank joined them at the table; and, after this repast was over, the family separated and retired to bed.

CHAPTER III.

MRS. CLIFTON, OF HARDBARGAIN.

CLIFTON by the morning sunlight! Oh that I could show it to you as Fairfax saw it from the balcony of his chamber on the morning of his arrival! The whole face of the country was very high, yet even this elevated land was broken into hills and valleys, rocks and glens. Behind the house arose the white cliffs so often mentioned, shutting out the northern view; but before the house lay the valley in which the plantation was situated, and around that—east, west, and south—stretched a magnificent panorama, ridge beyond ridge of mountains, covered with gigantic forests, clothed with the richest verdure, rolling on until they gradually faded away in the distance, their forms lost among the clouds of the horizon. It seemed a vast, boundless ocean of greenery, of which the vales and mountains were the stupendous waves, charmed to sleep.

It was a magnificent solitude—not a human dwelling to be seen. The planters' mansions, if there were any in the neighbourhood, were low in the vales, and hidden from sight. The mountain-torrent, as it came leaping down the side of the cliff, running through the wooded lawn, losing itself in the forest vale, and re-appearing as a mountain-lake among

the distant hills, was a beautiful feature in the landscape. The deep intense blue of the clear skies, the early splendour of the sunlight, the murmur of the breeze among the waving trees, the joyous songs of birds, gladdened all the scene, and put to flight Frank's blue devils, long before Dandy called him to breakfast.

The breakfast-table was set in the lawn under the shadow of the pine-elms.

The old gentleman, in his suit of cool white linen—the sisters, in neat morning dresses of white cambric—and the dark Georgia, in her usual dress of black—were assembled on the piazza. They greeted Mr. Fairfax with lively welcome, telling him that Clifton had not yet made his appearance. But even while they spoke, Captain Clifton joined them, and they sat down to breakfast. Those breakfasts on the lawn! How many times in after-years, in the sultry heat of the city hotel, did Fairfax recall them!

Soon after breakfast, Captain Clifton invited Mr. Fairfax to accompany him in a ride up the ridge to his mother's farm; and after taking leave of the ladies, they set out. They left the house by the back way, and took a winding bridle-path up the side of the cliffs. The day was very fine and cool, and their path was shaded by overhanging trees. It was altogether a delightful ride; and, as they went up, Clifton, who led the way, turned his head round and inquired—

"Frank, what instigated you to romance so last night about our sojourn at the mountain hut?"

"Romance? I didn't romance, except in saying that the girl was beautiful. I said *that* for your credit!"

"Oh! I ought to be *exceedingly* obliged to you!"

"Yes, I think so, too; but what malicious Puck gave *you* a love-weed, and fooled you into sitting and studying that ugly little girl's hard face all the evening?"

"I did not think her ugly at all. She has a noble countenance—a *most* noble countenance, one of which an empress might be proud!"

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! *I* saw nothing but a mountainous forehead, and a strong portcullis jaw! Noble! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I said you'd taken the love-powder!"

"Yet even you cannot find any but a *noble* simile in speaking of her 'ugly' features!'

"Ah! what will Miss Clifton think of this admiration?"

"Sir, Miss Clifton has my deepest homage; and when she is my wife, she will indulge no follies. But, Fairfax, you are absurd, and I beg you will abandon this ridiculous conversation. You know that I have always had a proclivity to the study of character. Nature made me something of a physiognomist; and if there be any truth in my favourite science, that mountain-girl's face presented the most extraordinary combination of power and goodness I have ever met with."

"Oh! then you only studied the maiden as the botanist would study a new plant, the geologist a new fossil, or the naturalist a strange animal—"

"Or the astronomer a new STAR? Precisely, sir! Except that the human being is the highest and most absorbing study of all!"

"Really, really this passes belief—the proud, fastidious Archer Clifton to be smitten with an ugly mountain-girl!"

"Frank, nonsense! You really anger me. Listen, then, and I will tell you why that child—for she is but a child—interested me so much. I saw in her face the signs of wonderful force of character, as yet undeveloped, and I saw in all her actions that which corroborated their testimony. I was surprised to find all that in the humble mountaineer, and speculated as to what, in her *very* humble situation, it might lead. That was simply all!"

"And did you not wish to be a providence to the mountain-girl, and open a field for so much energy?"

"Perhaps such a thought might have presented itself to my mind. If so, it was dismissed at once. A highly-gifted *man* of low birth must have extraordinary talents indeed, and be placed in extraordinary circumstances, to elevate himself above his condition; for a *girl* in such a case it is impossible. But, Fairfax, really this conversation has taken a more serious tone than I designed it should. Really, nobility of character, though very rare among the lower classes of society, is yet not so impossible as to excite our wonder. There are others like Kate Kavanagh—"

"How pat you've got her name! Now, *I* had forgotten it!"

"Pooh! I say there are others like her. They are born great—they live and die, and the world hears nothing of

them; and talents that might have swayed the counsels of a monarch, and decided the destinies of an empire, have been employed to direct the household of a shepherd, and determine the fate of a sheep! Such is the order of society; and better, far better so, than that its boundaries should be thrown down, its ranks intermingled!"

"There spoke a Clifton of Clifton!" said Frank.

They were now at the top of the ridge, and entering upon a hard, stony, half-reclaimed farm, in the midst of which stood a rude but substantial house, built of hewn rocks of every shade of grey, and surrounded by trees. Below them, all around, rose the forest-crowned hills; behind them, the white cliffs concealed the mansion of Clifton from their sight; all around them lay fields of stunted corn.

"This is Hardbargain," said Captain Clifton, opening a rude farm-gate, and holding it open, while his companion passed through.

"Hardbargain? a most appropriate name! I should think it the hardest of all bargains to receive this farm as a precious gift," replied Frank, looking around upon the stony field and stunted corn.

"Yes," admitted Captain Clifton, "it is a well-merited title. It was once called Rocky Ridge. A poor man got a grant of it, and settled there first—spent all his health and strength in trying to bring the rugged soil under cultivation—failed—christened the place Hard*scrabble*, and sold it to my grandfather for thrice its value. My grandfather repented the purchase, re-christened the ill-starred farm Hard*bargain*, and, as the Clifton estate was entailed upon his eldest son, gave this farm as a portion to his younger son, my father. My father was then a subaltern officer in the Continental Army, and absent with Washington, at Valley Forge. My mother, with myself, then an infant, was a temporary sojourner at Clifton. No sooner had my grandfather made a gift to my father of this nearly barren farm, than my mother set all her faculties at work for its cultivation and improvement. My mother was nearly penniless, being the daughter of a family of decayed fortune. My father was unable to send her anything except the Continental notes, with which he himself was paid, but which would scarcely pass farther. But being determined not to eat the bread of dependence by remaining at Clifton

after my grandfather's death, my mother sold all her jewellery and plate, which had been left her by a deceased maiden aunt, and applied the proceeds of the sale to the improvement of Hardbargain. She hired labourers. There was a rude log hut, built by the first settler upon the land. She hired a woman, and placed her in that hut to keep house and cook for them. She read books on agriculture, and consulted my uncle's overseer upon the same subject; and every morning she rode up and spent the day at Hardbargain, overlooking the labourers. She was her own overseer! Frank, you appreciate high worth when you see it! I may, besides, tell you anything—you are my only companion—I tell you that my dear mother was one in ten thousand. She was a true heroine, a heroine of domestic life; abandoning all her habits of elegance and refinement, despising luxury, ease, and comfort, disdaining the sneers of the world, and giving herself to toil and hardship, and weariness of body and mind, that she might win from the desert an independent home for her family! My dear mother had no reason to suppose, and never admitted the possibility, that my uncle would not be blessed with a male heir—that *I*, her son, for whom she toiled to secure a rugged farm, would be the inheritor of entailed Clifton! And so she toiled, year after year; until at the end of the war, when the army was reduced, and my father came home, he found a comfortable house, and a productive farm."

Clifton seemed to have fallen into one of his fits of reminiscence; scarcely conscious that he was talking to his true but volatile friend, scarcely conscious that he was talking *at all*, he went on—

"My first recollection of my dearest mother is of a very noble-looking lady, of dark complexion, black hair, and grey eyes. I recollect, when an infant of four years old, being brought out from the mansion-house of Clifton every morning to the back road gate, where she sat upon her horse awaiting me, with a little basket containing our dinner hanging on the horn of the saddle. I used to be lifted to the saddle before her; and while her left arm encircled me, with her right hand she would guide her horse around the base of the cliff, and take the winding bridle-path that led up the Rocky Ridge, upon which lay her sterile farm of Hardbargain. Oh! I remember how she used to ride from

field to field, making investigations, and giving directions to her rude workmen; and with what deference the rough men were used to address her—hat in hand. I remember, too, our cold dinners, taken under the shade of an elm-tree, whose lowest branches sheltered a fine spring—the head waters of that very torrent which, in course of time and space, swells into the mighty river I told you of. Oh, my noble mother! how few would have displayed her courage and fortitude!—not one in a million but would have rather sat down in the luxurious ease and abundance of Clifton, where she had a long welcome for as long as she should choose to stay, rather than have dared the toil and hardship that she endured. The land was at last cleared up, the farm laid off in order, and brought under the best possible cultivation. A comfortable house was built, and my mother moved into it to receive my father when he should come home, at the disbanding of his company. He came at last—it was a happy time—and well I remember how my mother's young but stern and weather-beaten face bloomed and softened again into youth, and beauty, and womanhood, by her soldier's side. But, ah! he had survived all the horrible perils and sufferings by cold, hunger, and the foe, endured by our army during that long and terrible struggle, and returned safe, to die in a time of peace—to die at home, where every care and comfort surrounded him. Yes, he came home in the winter of '82. Towards the spring, he took a slight cold—it was neglected as of little account—it settled upon his lungs—before winter came again he died, and the first snow that fell fell upon his grave. My honoured mother was a strong-minded woman. After what I have told you, you know that she was. She loved him as only the strong can love—she suffered as only the strong can suffer. She rose above that death-blow to her happiness as only the strong can rise; but she has never been the same woman since. When a few years had passed, and her son's welfare demanded her care, she aroused every faculty of her mind and body, for the 'purpose of insuring' his greatest good. Even at that epoch of time, there was no reason to suppose that I should inherit the Clifton estate. My uncle was then in the prime of manhood, had married his second wife, and by no means despaired of male issue. My dear mother taxed soul, body, and estate to the utmost, to defray my

expenses at college, during the seven years of my residence there. It was also to her persevering exertions, as well as to the late military services of my deceased father, that I owed my commission in the army. They say that *misfortunes* never come single. *Good fortune* certainly never does, if I may judge of our own experience of both. When I had left college, the heaviest tax was raised from our income; and when I obtained a commission in the army, my year's pay more than doubled the annual income from the proceeds of the farm. At this time also my mother received a legacy from an aged and distant relative, which enabled her to stock her farm well, and furnish her house comfortably. Furthermore, my uncle, having lost his *third* wife, and at last given up all thoughts of a son of his own, began to take quite a paternal interest in me—insisting, when off duty, I should spend all my time with him—and, finding neither myself nor my mother disposed to forego each other's society, would have persuaded the latter to take up her abode under his roof. But that arrangement did not suit my mother. She who in her young womanhood had too high a spirit for dependence—preferring to give herself to severest toil and privation rather than live in easy luxury under another's roof—could not in her stern maturity be bribed to give up her well-earned independence. Nor, indeed, under any circumstances, should I have consented to the plan. We compromised the matter by my agreeing to spend half the time of furlough at Clifton. This was the more congenial to my feelings, as my cousin Carolyn had now left school permanently. As for my uncle, he consoled himself for his disappointment in not getting my mother's society at Clifton, by marrying a fourth wife."

"I am impressed with the idea that your mother is a very proud woman, Clifton!" said Frank, taking advantage of Captain Clifton's first thoughtful pause.

"No, no," he answered, slowly, as in half reverie, "no; she is not what the world calls proud—she is no conservator of rank, as I am. She is the only *true* republican I know in this whole Republic. Sprung herself from an ancient, noble, and haughty race, she yet honours talent and virtue, when met with in the lowest ranks, as much—nay, I verily believe, *more*—than when found in the highest circles, where it is natural they should be more frequently seen. But

here we are, and you shall judge for yourself," concluded Captain Clifton, as he opened a gate admitting them into a shady yard, in the midst of which stood the house. They alighted at the gate and gave their horses into the charge of a negro boy, and walked on to the house. It was a plain oblong stone building of two storeys, with a deep, shady piazza running the whole length of the front. It was divided through the centre by a wide passage-way, the front and back doors of which were both open, and drawing a fine draught of air, and from which opened four large airy rooms, two on a side. They stepped up on the piazza, and were met at the front door by a neatly-clothed negro girl, who admitted them into the passage, and, opening a door on the right hand next the front, showed them into a cool, breezy, but plainly-furnished parlour; the walls and ceiling being simply whitewashed, and the floor bare but highly polished with wax, as was the summer custom of the country at that day. The fireplace was open and filled with green bushes. The window-curtains, and the lounge, and easy-chair covers, were all of chintz. There was a reality of substantial and permanent comfort about the place that Frank thought he had never seen elsewhere; and when Clifton invited him to be seated, and he rested himself in one of those cool arm-chairs in that shaded room, he declared that a feeling of at-home-ativeness came over him, such as he had never experienced since he left his own mother's house, and never hoped to feel again until he should have a house of his own. The negro girl, whom Clifton addressed as Hennie, then left the room to summon her mistress, and shortly after the lady of the house entered.

Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain was now about fifty years of age, tall, and inclining to *embonpoint*, but not more so than well became her years. Her complexion was dark, and her hair and eyes black. Her features were strongly marked and commanding, indicative of great strength of will and indomitable firmness of purpose, all moderated, however, by the expression of her countenance, which was at once composed and gracious. Her manner was marked by unaffected dignity and courtesy; her dress was of very plain dark silk, made high to the throat, and with sleeves coming down to the wrists, a small ruff set closely around her neck, fastened with a mourning pin. Her only headdress was her own

black hair, which, though slightly mingled with grey, was worn uncovered. Indeed, cap or turban upon that noble head would have looked impertinent. She advanced into the room and greeted her son with affection, and welcomed Mr. Fairfax with courtesy, though her words were so few, and her manner was so calm, as to seem cool. Frank thought her a very noble-looking woman, though somewhat stiff and cold. Indeed, all strangers and superficial observers thought her cold and proud. Never was a greater misapprehension of character—never did a larger or more generous heart live in the bosom of woman—albeit, its pulsations were of the calmest and most regular character. She sat down and entered into an easy conversation with her son and his friend, inquiring into the particulars of their journey, and making comments as they were related. Once during the recital her cheek almost imperceptibly changed. It was at the telling of the hair-breadth escape at the brink of the Devil's Staircase, but upon that she made no observation whatever. She rang a little handbell, which was answered by the entrance of Hennie. She took a bunch of keys from her pocket, and, giving them to the girl, directed her to bring refreshments. Hennie left the room, but soon returned, bearing a large waiter with home-made wine, cake, and a basket of fine peaches and pears. While they regaled themselves upon these luxuries, she inquired after the health and well-being of the family of White Cliffs, and having received satisfactory answers, turned to Mr. Fairfax, and hoped that he was sufficiently well pleased with their neighbourhood to favour it with a long sojourn. Frank assured her that he should never grow weary of the delights of his visit, and should conclude it only when compelled to do so, and *then* with great regret. The conversation then became of more general interest. The weather, the condition of the roads, the health of the neighbourhood, &c., were discussed. And then the discourse took a higher tone, and the agricultural and political condition and prospects of the whole country, and the great probability of another speedy war with Great Britain, were debated; and Mr. Fairfax wondered at the extent of information, the strong grasp of mind, and the depth and justness of thought, displayed by this recluse lady upon subjects apparently so foreign to her daily experience.

They made quite a long morning visit; and before their departure, Captain Clifton took an opportunity—while Mr. Fairfax was walking around the room and staring at some old family pictures, among which hung a portrait, by ——, of Oliver Cromwell, as Lord Protector of England—to draw his mother aside, and say to her—

"Madam, I have a proposition to make to you, or a favour to ask, as it may turn out."

"What is it, my son?" gravely inquired the lady.

"You heard Mr. Fairfax speak of the young mountain-girl whom we met just before the storm, and who kindly conducted us to her grandfather's cabin?"

"Yes."

"It is of her that I would speak, and for her that I would enlist your sympathy and protection."

"Go on, I attend, my son."

"You have given me some credit for insight into character. If my judgment is worthy of your consideration, this young girl is deserving of your kindest offices."

"Does she deserve them?"

"Madam, she impressed me as being a child of high moral and mental endowments, and the trying experience of one night proved the truth of that impression."

"Does she need my good offices?"

"Mother, with the finest intellectual capacities, she is nearly destitute of all opportunities of intellectual culture. That is bad—but not so deplorable as what follows. Kate Kavanagh—that is her name—is far removed from all of her own sex. Her young brother, her only protector, is absent from home from earliest dawn till late at night. Her only companion is an old man, an habitual drunkard, subject to frequent and furious fits of *mania-a-potu*. Her case, upon my showing, may not be so exigent; but if you had seen her as I did, it would seem so. Her brother, being best acquainted with the circumstances, is the best judge in the premises, and is very anxious upon his sister's account, and wishes to get her a place at service."

"But if she is a girl of so excellent a nature as you have supposed, will she leave her aged relative?"

"Not willingly, certainly; but I wish the opportunity of improving her condition afforded her—indeed, I promised her brother Carl that it should be presented."

"I know Carl Kavanagh—he worked for me during the last year. I formed a good opinion of him. If his sister is equal to him, she must be a meritorious girl."

"She is very superior to him, madam."

The lady was mistress of great promptitude and decision of action. With her eyes fixed upon the ground, she reflected for a few moments, then, lifting them, said, "Write to your friend Carl Kavanagh—"

"Not my *friend*, dear madam, an' it please you!" haughtily interrupted her son.

A slight shade of disapproval or of displeasure clouded the lady's brow for a moment, and she said, "Write, then, to your dependant, Carl Kavanagh, and let him know that I am willing to receive his sister into my own service on trial, and that he may bring her hither as soon as is convenient."

"Thank you, dearest madam. I will write to-day, and send a messenger with the letter. I am really pleased and grateful for this kindness," said Archer Clifton, pressing his lips to the cheek she offered to his salute.

The young men soon after took leave, being engaged to dine that day at home at White Cliffs.

"Clifton!" said Mr. Fairfax, as they rode along, "excuse me for telling you freely how highly I honour your mother. Yes! you may stare! *I*—the irreverent, the rash—said, *excuse* me for telling you how highly I honour your mother; for, by my faith, she is a lady whom to praise is presumption! But, my dear Clifton, how is it that she resembles so closely that old portrait of Oliver Cromwell, which hangs, besides, between two family portraits. It is not possible you claim descent from *him*?"

"My mother does, by the female line. I do not think I have much of his nature. In his time I should have been a royalist. My mother venerates his character very highly."

"By my soul! she is like him enough in feature."

"Yes; and in many points of character she is strikingly like him."

In conversation such as this the friends reached White Cliffs; and Mr. Fairfax retired to his chamber to dress for dinner, and Captain Clifton entered the library for the purpose of writing a letter to Carl Kavanagh.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TIDE OF FATE.

CAPTAIN CLIFTON had written to Carl Kavanagh, informing him of the situation he had procured for the sister of the latter, at Hardbargain; and within this letter he had inclosed a longer one to Kate, filled with good counsels and urgent reasons why she should yield to the wishes of her brother, and accept the place offered to her. After having despatched these letters by a boy, who left White Cliffs that afternoon on horseback, he delivered himself up to the delights of Miss Clifton's society, forgetting all about the mountain-girl, until the next day, when, being seated in the library, his messenger returned, entered his presence, and handed him a packet. It was a letter from Carl Kavanagh, inclosing one from Kate. He read Carl's epistle first. It began by expressing much gratitude to his benefactor for his kindness in having procured a situation for his sister, and went on by expressing much sorrow that he could not prevail upon Kate, either by intreaties or threats, to accept it, and unbounded indignation at what he called the girl's wicked stubbornness. The letter closed by reiterating the thanks of the writer. Captain Clifton held the letter open in his hand, and, lifting his head, fell into deep thought. It was strange how much this little matter depressed him. Account for it, any philosopher that can. Some proud people have a proclivity to patronage—Captain Clifton was very proud, and perhaps he was piqued at being prevented playing the patron. Perhaps it was really disappointed benevolence. Only it is certain that Archer Clifton did not possess that quality to an immoderate degree; and, having once done his duty of charity, would be likely to content himself with any result. Perchance he felt a deeper interest in the rugged little mountaineer than he would have acknowledged, even to himself. Perhaps it was prescience—the shadow of coming events. Be that as it may, Archer Clifton walked up and down the floor in silent thought, occasionally broken by a slight sigh. It was wonderful how much the knowledge that he should not have this child at home in his mother's house vexed his soul.

At length he recollected Kate's own letter, yet unopened. But of what avail to read it? It would certainly be the counterpart of Carl's. He opened it. It was not, however. In the first place, the paper was perfectly clean; and, in the second, the writing, spelling, and style were rather better. She acknowledged the goodness of Captain Clifton, in taking thought of her humble wants—expressed regret that she could not avail herself of his kindness—could not leave her grandfather, who needed her services, and subscribed herself Captain Clifton's obliged and grateful servant. It *was* very much like Carl's, after all. But here is a postscript. What more can she have to say, after what she has said? thought Clifton, as he turned it over. It read thus—

"P.S. — I hope Captain Clifton will pardon me, if he thinks that I am doing wrong; but it has come into my head that, as Captain Clifton is about to marry, and reside in future at White Cliffs, and as Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain will then be quite alone, and as she is not so young, or active, or able to ride about her plantation, overseeing her field-hands as formerly—perhaps she will be thinking of getting a farm-manager. If so, will Captain Clifton kindly remember my brother Carl, and speak a favourable word for him to the lady of Hardbargain, who already knows and trusts him? If Carl gets a situation as overseer, I can keep house for him, and we can both take care of our grandfather. Indeed, I am afraid Captain Clifton will be justly angry with me for this liberty."

"What a letter!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, as his face alternately lighted up with satisfaction, or became clouded with thought. "What a letter for a rustic girl of fourteen! Yet characteristic of *her* and of her situation; showing the germs of reflection, forethought, courage, and promptitude, the gifts of nature, mingled with that frankness bordering upon presumption which belongs to total ignorance of the world. To dare to speak familiarly of our domestic affairs! But yet how naively she deprecates my displeasure, at what she feels may be received as presumption!"

So deeply did Captain Clifton study Kate and her letter: Kate's remarkable countenance, with its breadth of brow and gentleness of eyes, haunted him.

He was a man of prompt decision and action; so, having once admitted the idea that his mother needed an overseer,

he exclaimed, "Yes, my mother must be relieved from her arduous occupation, unbefitting a lady of her rank, and especially of her age. Why could I not think of that before? Why should I never have seen the necessity until Catherine held it up before me? Yes, my mother must have a manager on her farm, and Carl Kavanagh shall be the man. I will pay his salary myself." And he rang the bell, ordered his horse, and in less than fifteen minutes was on his way to Hardbargain.

As he rode up to the house, he met a girl, with a pail on her head, going to the spring, and inquired of her where her mistress was to be found. He was told, "down in the wheat-field." So, turning his horse's head a little to the left of the house, he rode down the slope of the hill to a wide harvest-field, where he found Mrs. Clifton, seated on her mule, superintending the operations of some fifteen or twenty labourers, who were employed in stacking wheat. He rode up to his mother's side, alighted, and held out his hand, saying, "How do you do to-day, madam? Busily engaged as ever, I see, mother."

"How do you do, Archer? Yes, very busy."

While Captain Clifton was revolving in his mind the best way of introducing the object of his visit, which he had reason to believe would be distasteful to the energetic, independent lady, she quite unconsciously anticipated his intention, and relieved him from his embarrassment, by saying, "This heat is extremely oppressive, and I begin to find this business too much for me, Archer. This continuing out in the fields day after day, and all day long, throughout this burning weather, begins to tell even upon my constitution."

Archer Clifton looked at his mother and noticed for the first time a slight but certain change in her countenance, invisible, perhaps, to an indifferent glance, but seeming to the eye of affection fearfully like the very earliest premonitory symptoms of decay. That look pierced him to the heart. The fainter sound of her voice, too, had vaguely suggested failing strength—it fell upon his ear like a prophecy, a warning, a knell. He realised then, for the first time, that his mother was mortal—was growing old—that some day he should lose her. He felt then, for the first time, how much *he*, a man, had rested on this good mother—and

his heart was troubled within him. And yet it was all caused only by a transient weariness in the look of her face, and a faintness in the tone of her voice. But more than all things else on earth — more *deeply*, though less ardently, than his own fair expectant bride—did Archer Clifton love his mother! It had even been said, some years before, by one who knew him best, that Clifton could never love any woman with the full force of his nature unless in qualities of mind and heart she resembled his mother; but, of course, Captain Clifton had disproved that prophecy by adoring his cousin, the haughty and beautiful Miss Clifton. This is a disgression: to return.

As the new pang of fear for his mother's health sped through his heart, Archer Clifton took her hand—he had a singularly sweet and persuasive voice and manner when moved by his affections—and said, "There is no necessity for it, dear mother. Surely, the motive that prompted you when I was a lad, and when this farm was our only prospect, has long ceased to operate."

"I know it, Archer. For some years past this personal superintendence of the fields has been more a matter of habit than a matter of necessity. If I could find a good manager, I might try one."

"What do you think of Carl Kavanagh in that capacity, mother?"

"Carl? I never thought of him at all. He has never managed a plantation."

"But yet he has been a farm-labourer many years, has a practical knowledge of agriculture, and is, besides, a man of more intelligence than is usually to be found in his class."

"Yes, he is," said the lady thoughtfully.

"He is also a man of excellent moral character and faultless habits—qualities not too frequently met with among those of his grade."

"True, most true; but yet he is young, and has had no experience in overseeing."

"And never will have, dear madam, unless some one gives him the opportunity of making the trial. And as for his youth, mother, why his youth is positively an advantage; for, with his practical knowledge, intelligence, and honesty, he will be free from the conceit and crotchets of an old manager, and will the more readily fall into your system."

"There is something in that," said the lady. "And now, Archer, you will remain and dine with me to-day; and remember that, when this week is out, the next week belongs to me. You must bring your friend with you when you come. Where did you leave him?"

"Playing battledore with Zuleime. But, dear mother, about this Carl Kavanagh—I hope you will consider the plan favourably, and try him."

"I will think of it, Archer, because you propose it, if for no other reason. And now the horn is blowing for the hands to go to dinner, and my task for the day is relieved. Let us return to the house."

They turned their animals' heads, and rode up the ascent, and entered the shady yard. Then the lady alighted from her mule, gathered up her riding-skirt, and, leaning on the arm of her son, entered the house. A plain but substantial dinner was soon served. Archer Clifton enjoyed his mother's plain meals more than the most luxurious dinners—not but that he had a taste for luxury—what man has not?—but that there was a home comfort about his mother's table that gave him appetite and spirit. And then, after dinner, he could go and stretch himself upon the best lounge in that large, shady, breezy parlour, with a book, and read or doze until she had attended to the putting away of her things, and had locked up her pantries. Then she would come and sit in the rocking-chair by his side, while he could stretch himself at ease, in any ungainly attitude he pleased, and feel what a refreshing thing it was to throw off his dignity in the presence of the only one with whom he could do so—his own familiar mother; not but that he honoured—nay, *revered*—her; but that he enjoyed only in her house that deep, full sense of home freedom which not only her son, but to a certain degree all others felt, who possessed the privilege of the lady's friendship.

This afternoon, then, he was lying at his ease on the cool lounge between the two front windows, which were drawing strong draughts of air, and flapping the festooned curtains lazily. He had thrown himself out at full length upon the lounge, in the most delightfully *dégagé* attitude, albeit it was somewhat angular and awkward—his head being thrown back over the end of the lounge, his hands clasped above his forehead, and his elbows very prominent; one foot, minus a slipper, hoisted

upon the window-sill, and the other slippered foot dangling on the carpet. But the picturesque beauty of his dark, handsome face atoned for all the rest. His mother sat in an easy-chair near him, with her feet upon a footstool and a workstand by her side. She was engaged in stitching wristbands—for that vigorous woman never required a lounge in the daytime; but though she never took one, yet she never blamed the indulgence of that habit in others for which she herself felt no inclination. She was the most liberal and benevolent of all human beings, in every act of her daily life. She was happy in seeing others comfortable around her. She was ever pleased to see them enjoying those relaxations which her own strong nature did not need. Indeed, courage without asperity, fortitude without endurancy, strength without hardness, self-denial without sternness, power without arrogance, formed the peculiar excellence of her character. No wonder that her son revered her; no wonder it had been said of him that he never could love a woman with all the power of his nature unless in mental and moral endowments she resembled his mother. As they talked together this afternoon, the hours slipped away till late in the evening, before the image of the beautiful Carolyn had power to draw him from the *tête-à-tête*. During the afternoon, he had prevailed with his mother to receive Carl Kavanagh as her overseer, and to have the comfortable log-cabin which had been occupied by the first proprietor of the soil prepared for the reception of the family.

When Archer Clifton at length arose to take his leave, he pressed his mother to his heart with so much fondness and power, that the quiet, calm lady laughed, a little, low, jolly laugh, and jested about Carolyn's jealousy—even of his mother.

Captain Clifton returned to White Cliffs, and gave himself up for the rest of the evening to the charms of Carolyn's conversation.

The next day was one of festivity. Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain came over to dine at White Cliffs, and to meet a large party of the neighbouring gentry. The day after that, the whole party dined and spent the evening at Hardbargain; and this was the commencement of a series of neighbour-

hood entertainments in honour of the approaching marriage, which were kept up for several weeks. The wedding was to come off in the course of a month—the present delay being owing to this circumstance: Old Mr. Clifton had sent to England, by the good ship *Rockbridge*, Captain Cater, an extensive order, including a splendid outfit for the bride; and they were now awaiting to hear of the arrival of the *Rockbridge* at Norfolk. In all the excitement of social enjoyment, Captain Clifton had found time to ride to the mountain hut, and arrange with Carl Kavanagh to come and take the situation of overseer at Hardbargain. He agreed to pay the latter a liberal salary, and to provide a comfortable house for his family. One thing surprised and annoyed him. Kate, who had written so freely, frankly, almost presumptuously to him, received him with the old cold shyness and reserve—not even expressing the least gratitude for the kindness he had shown in getting the situation for her brother, or the trouble he had condescended to take in coming personally to inform them of it. He agreed with Carl that the latter, with his grandfather and sister, should remove to Hardbargain in the course of the week; and on his own part he promised to have the log-house prepared for their reception. He shook hands with the old man and Carl on parting; but when he offered the same civility to Kate, she turned pale and trembled; and when he took her hand, he found it cold.

"I do not think you are well, my dear girl. Your mountain air does not engender chills, does it?" he asked, pressing the cold fingers.

She raised her eyes one brief instant to his, and dropped them quickly again, while her pale cheek and brow became suffused with crimson, and the hand that he held in his own throbbed like a heart.

"When we get you to the plantation, you will be better, my dear girl," said Clifton kindly, shaking her hand and letting it go.

Captain Clifton rode away full of thought—speculating more upon Catherine's reserve than became a gentleman of his station and importance. What was it to him that a rustic girl was too shy to express in person her thanks for a favour received, even though she had "screwed her courage to the sticking-place" to write to him and solicit it? Many people, more conversant with the world than Catherine, can write

that which they never can bring their lips to say. Besides, it was no matter: what was that lowly maiden to him, the heir of Clifton, and the prospective husband of the highest and haughtiest lady in the land? Yes—what to him except an object of his high patronage could be that girl of, not only "humble parentage," but indubitably *low birth?* He rode on dissatisfied, he knew not wherefore, with her and himself.

As for Catherine, she stood lost, where he had left her—lost to the consciousness of her grandfather's and of Carl's presence—with her eyes fixed upon the ground, blaming herself for her awkwardness and seeming ingratitude; wondering if *he* blamed her too; wondering why it was that, when she saw him enter, she grew cold and trembled so; and when he spoke to her in that gentle tone, and looked at her with that gentle gaze, her whole nature shrank away in fear and trepidation; and though she would have given the world for the ability to express her gratitude and regard, all power of uttering a grateful word or of lifting a grateful glance to his face deserted her, and left her pale and trembling before the man whom she had no cause to fear, and every reason to trust. Catherine stood with her mind deep in this problem, until the harsh voice of Carl startled her, saying in rasping tones—

"Well! are you going to stand there burrowing your eyes in the ground all day? A pretty way you have behaved! Please goodness, you've got no more manners than a dumb brute! I take my oath I am ashamed of you! Now, there was Captain Clifton, a gentleman of so high rank, condescending to come here and tell us himself of the place he had got for us, even after your unmannerly refusal of that first place—and here were you with not one *word* of thanks to give—no! please Heaven, not so much as one civil *look!* I wonder what he'll think of you?"

"What, indeed?" repeated Catherine very meekly.

But Carl scarcely recognised her voice. It was no longer the childish treble—it was the deep, full, melodious voice of rich womanhood.

"Why, the *kindest* thought he can have of you will be to think you are a *fool*—that is all."

"Carl, I was in fear of him."

"In fear of him! In fear of Archer Clifton! A man whom all the country knows to be of the highest honour,

and one to whom even *I*, cautious as *I* am, could trust you with, to go from one end of the world to the other!"

"I know that, Carl—I know he is a gentleman of honour; but—but—I tremble before him, and have not courage to lift my eyes."

"But that is so confoundedly ridiculous, now! *Why* are you afraid of him?"

Kate shook her head and waved her hand in that quick, short manner which was peculiar to her, and turned away—repeating in her own heart the question, "Yes, why, *why*, WHY?"

Whether the maiden found an answer to her question or not remained a secret to Carl; this was the first and last conversation they ever held on the subject; and whatever phenomena the opening heart of the maiden revealed to herself were carefully shrouded away from the eyes of all.

How beautiful was Carolyn Clifton! so fair, so purely, so divinely fair, so radiant, so refined, so stately! How fit a consort for the proud Archer Clifton! How his heart swelled with admiration and pride as he gazed upon her queenly form! and how it glowed to think that in a very few days that fair and stately lady, who never deigned to own a passion, whose love he only guessed by her proud exaction of exclusive service, who scarcely condescended to extend her snowy hand to his salute, would be his own, his own, his wife, his property, his other self—whose form he might press to his bosom in the fullest freedom of possession! And as he sat by her side and held her hand, and gazed upon her inaccessible, delightful beauty, oh! how slowly, slowly, to his impatient, burning, throbbing heart—how slowly dragged the days and hours!

Well—oh! very well would it have been for Archer Clifton, could he have rent his gaze from his magnetic idol a moment, and caught a certain pair of evil eyes upon him. Their baleful glare might have shed upon his path some light to see the pitfalls in his way.

CHAPTER V.

THE TIDE OF FATE.—(CONTINUED.)

CARL KAVANAGH and his sister were settled in the log-cabin on the farm of Hardbargain. Carl, as an old acquaintance of the mistress, and a late labourer on the plantation, fell readily into his new business of overseeing it. Catherine began to busy herself in the management of her new and very comfortable home. Their cabin contained a sitting-room, kitchen, and two chambers. Mrs. Clifton had gratified her own kindly and benevolent disposition by adding several plain articles of furniture to the small stock possessed by the poor family. She had, besides, given Catherine a set of half-worn, white dimity curtains, and a pair of coarse, home-made, white counterpanes. These gave an air of neatness—approaching, I had almost said refinement—to the sitting-room, and two little bed-rooms. Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain was not addicted to taking sudden likings—indeed, though a lady of perfect frankness, benevolence, and liberality of judgment, she was cool and prudent; yet, notwithstanding this, her kindest affections were at once attracted towards Kate. It is true she had been prepared to think well of the child from an intimate knowledge of her brother Carl's honesty and intelligence; but at the first sight of Catherine, the noble countenance of the mountain-girl riveted her esteem. There are some faces which we know at a glance cannot belong to other than a fine, high-toned character, and such a countenance was that of Catherine; and it won upon the lady every day, as no merely beautiful face could ever have done. For hers was a brow "where every god did seem to set his seal, to give the world assurance of" a peerless woman. Often Mrs. Clifton invited Catherine to bring her work and sit with her through the afternoon; and seldom did she let the girl return without placing in her hand some book just suitable to her very age, and the stage of progress of her mind. And, oh! did not the heart of the maiden kindle and glow with love and admiration for the noble lady who, without one particle of pride, or the least pretension to condescension, condescended so much? And so Catherine grew to understand and appreciate Mrs. Clifton,

and to look upon her with a feeling amounting almost to worship. How happy were those afternoons spent with her in the cool and breezy parlour! How deeply grateful was Kate for all her benefits—how anxious to prove her gratitude—to do something for her benefactress! But Kate was very shy, and her love only spoke in the stealthy look of affection fixed upon the lady, and withdrawn with a deeply-blushing cheek if discovered. But by these tokens sure did Mrs. Clifton know the sweetness and the tenderness, the modesty and the sincerity, of the maiden's hidden heart. And all this time was Catherine wishing for the ability to tell her friend how much she thanked and loved her. One afternoon she mustered up the courage to tell the lady that she should like to read to her any time that it would be agreeable; also, that she had some skill in doing up laces and such things, and that she should be happy if she could assist Mrs. Clifton in such matters. Mrs. Clifton placed her hand affectionately on Catherine's head, and declined all her offers of service except that which related to the reading, which she accepted, hoping thereby to improve her *protégée* in many ways—to direct her choice of books, to correct her elocution, and to awaken her understanding of what she read by questions and comments. So they began a course of historical reading with Rollin's Ancient History; and that which this excellent lady commenced as a duty of kindness soon became a matter of daily recreation. It was, indeed, a rare intellectual pleasure to arouse, cultivate, and hold communion with a fresh, vigorous, original, enthusiastic mind like that of Catherine. And those afternoons were almost as happy for the lady as for her *protégée*—happier for Catherine they could not have been. Once, the shy girl was entirely carried out of herself and her reverie by the following circumstance. The lady had inadvertently let fall that she was a descendant of Oliver Cromwell, when Kate, hurried beyond her consciousness, clasped her hand and gazed fervently up in her face, exclaiming—

"Descended from Oliver Cromwell? Descended from Oliver Cromwell, that friend of man? that friend of freedom? Oh! it is no wonder, lady, that you are so noble! so superior to all the world!"

"My Catherine," said the lady, calmly withdrawing her hand, "you know too little, far too little of the world to

judge how I stand in comparison to others. And what know you of Oliver Cromwell? Our reading has scarcely reached the invasion of Britain by the Romans."

"O lady! lady! lady!" said Kate warmly, being not yet recovered from her trance, "lady, Carl and I had not many books, so we read what we had over and over again! And one of the books we read the most was the 'Life of Oliver Cromwell!'"

"You are generally so shy, Catherine, that it is a blind work in me to direct your studies, not knowing what you have read and what you have not."

Yes, very delightful to both were these seasons, and very strong was the affection beginning to cement between the lady and the maiden. There was only one thing that disturbed Catherine in the perfect enjoyment of these afternoons: when Archer Clifton would surprise them by suddenly entering the room, and throwing himself into an arm-chair or upon a sofa, her heart would stand still, and her whole frame tremble with an agitation as impossible to comprehend as to conquer. And yet much as his arrival disturbed her, his departure failed to make her happy; on the contrary, it left a strange sadness and yearning she could not shake off. But then these things were of rare occurrence. Captain Clifton very seldom found time to visit his mother—he was contented to know that she had a companion; and as for Kate, he never thought of her at all—she was provided for and forgotten. Body, soul, and spirit were taken up—absorbed in the contemplation of his promised bride, and in the anticipation of her possession. Catherine knew he was soon to be married, but what of that? She was a child, with no knowledge at her tender years to understand her own heart, and no skill to define its first developments.

At White Cliffs "all went merry as a marriage-bell." The *Rockbridge* was at length telegraphed at Norfolk. A letter, with an invoice, was received by Mr. Clifton, who immediately despatched a special messenger to receive his valuable portion of the cargo. The wedding-day was fixed for that day week, and great preparations were on foot. The gentry of the neighbouring counties were invited. The mansion-house was "swept and garnished" from garret to cellar. Frank and Zulcime were daily rehearsing their parts

as bridesmaid and groomsman, which Frank declared to be only an apprenticeship to the business of enacting bride and groom. Some city guests from Richmond had arrived by particular invitation, four or five days before the expected wedding. Last of all came the waggon with the boxes from Norfolk. They were opened in the hall—such treasure of splendid attire, and such sets of jewellery; and, above all, such a *trousseau* for the bride, conspicuous in which was the bridal-dress and veil—the bridal-dress and train of richest white brocade, heavily embroidered with silver, after the gorgeous fashion of that time, the bridal-veil of finest lace—the orange-flower wreath of pearls and emeralds, the pearl-embroidered gloves and slippers, the pearl and silver-mounted fan, and all complete in correspondence. And richer still was a ball-dress of blue silver-embroidered brocade, with its elegant *coiffure* of ostrich feathers, the sight of which Zuleime declared was enough to precipitate *any* girl into matrimony.

Everyone was too happy, too busy, and too self-important to notice the deathly hue of Georgia's cheek, far less to detect the fitful glare of the well-guarded eye—everyone but her husband, who, leaving his daughters and their maids to unpack the boxes, followed her into her own chamber, saying, as he fondly laid his hand upon her shoulder, "My darling doesn't seem to be merry."

She shrank, shuddered from his touch, exclaiming almost shrilly, "Leave me!"

"Leave you, my dear! my child! why leave you?" he asked, passing his hand gently around her shoulders.

"Leave me! leave me!" she cried sharply, casting off the arm and springing back—her cheek blanched, her teeth snapping, her eyes sparkling fire, more like a terrified wolf than a woman. "Have I not told you never, *never* to come near me in my dark hour?"

"But why should my cherished pet have dark hours?" he persisted, approaching her.

"Keep off! keep off, old man! you know not what you do!"

"Yes, I'm old—I know I'm old—I wish I wasn't; for I love you, my darling. Yes, I love you more tenderly and less selfishly than if I was younger. I love you entirely—altogether—your little dark face, your little fiery ways—your little outbursts of temper that no one sees but me, who

look upon it with indulgent eyes. Would a young man love you so tenderly, Georgia?"

"Driveller! you make me loathe you! My little fiery ways, my little outbursts of temper, forsooth! How little do you understand me! You sting my soul to frenzy with your dotage, and then twaddle about liking my *little outbursts of temper*, forsooth."

"Dotage! Yes! I really do suppose you consider it dotage!"

"Yes! drivelling, idiotic, imbecile dotage!"

"Yes! I do suppose you think it is! I am too old for you, Georgia—I know it, alas! too well, now that it is too late; and yet you did not raise the least objection to becoming my wife, Georgia."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! *Objection!* I was but fifteen years of age when you bribed me to your arms with a set of jewels, and a gold-mounted work-box! I was a child, delighted with glittering toys, and fond—yes! *very* fond—of the grandfatherly old man that poured them into my lap! Did *that* child-fondness deceive you?"

"It did, it did! You were very fond of me when you were a child. Would to God I could have spell-bound you to that age, so you never could have grown older! Oh, I could find it in heart to shame my manhood, to shame my grey hairs and weep! I should not have married you, Georgia, child. I should not have sacrificed you to my selfish love—yet, no! It was *not* selfish love. I wished your greatest good. I wished to surround you for life with all the means and appliances of happiness. I wished to lavish wealth upon you—ay, wealth of gold, and wealth of affection, too! I wished to give you a sumptuous home, splendid apparel, costly jewels, carriages, servants—all those things which women value so much, and scheme, and plot, and endeavour for so perseveringly. I wished to give them all to my darling before she should have time to feel the need of them."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!" bitterly laughed the girl. "Oh! do you know what women value more than gold, and jewels, and dress, and carriages, and horses, and servants? I'll tell you: the ungalled, unfettered heart's freedom!"

"I know it! Oh, I know it! My love has destroyed your happiness. O Georgia! did you never see a beau-

tiful bird, and long to have it for your own, only to caress, and pamper, and pet it? O Georgia! my child, my pet, my bird! that was the reason I wanted you! I wanted to cherish, and fondle, and make you happy!"

"*Ah-h!* And did *you* never see such a bird as you spoke of, in spite of all the petting, and pampering, and fondlings, beat out its weary life against its prison-bars, and die?"

"Don't die, Georgia! Don't die! Hope! Alas! I wished only to make you happy—I have failed! I have made you miserable!"

"*Miserable!*—ruined, despairing, desperate!" she cried, wildly wringing her hands.

"Nay, not despairing, Georgia! I am an old man, as you justly said—*quite* an old man. I have not very long to live; and when I die, Georgia, you will still be a very young woman. Bethink you, you are scarce seventeen—in ten years more you will be but twenty-seven; and is it even likely that I shall live so long as that? No. And after my heart is cold, and my head is laid low, Georgia will be a beautiful young widow—ay, and with a rich jointure, too. I shall take care of that."

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! *pathetic!* I tell you that, if you were to die to-morrow, my life is not the less ruined, despairing!" bitterly exclaimed the young woman.

"Nay, but that cannot be, Georgia. Ruined? despairing? What! at seventeen years of age? Nonsense, my love! *Nothing* but crime can make the youthful despair. Nonsense, my child! You are hysterical," he said, moving towards her with outstretched arms.

"Dotard! driveller!" she cried, turning fiercely upon him, with eyes blazing with scorn and malignity. "*Imbecile!* will you leave me to myself?"

The old gentleman turned away, walked several times slowly up and down the floor, and finally saying, "Yes, I know I am a dotard. I know it, and I grow ashamed of dotage," clapped his hat upon his head and walked out.

Bitterly did the old man rue his folly; yet, alas! he knew but half the cause of that ingrate and wretched woman's fierce outbreaks of temper.

She followed his retreating form with a glaring of mingled rage and fear, gnawing her white lips, while she muttered in a low, fierce tone—

"I could tear my heart out! I could bite my tongue off for thus betraying me! Shall I ever have power to chain and guide the tiger in me? But *he* with his doting, and *they* with their dalliance, goad me to extremity. *But*," she exclaimed, clenching her fist, setting her teeth, and glaring, while all her countenance darkened with rage and anguish, "but before they shall MARRY under my very eyes, and live here maddening my soul and senses day and night by the view of their love and joy, I will pull down ruin on the heads of all! Yes, although myself should be the first to fall!" She paused in silent thought some time, then, rising, said, "*Down*, tiger heart! *Down!* crouch! Be smooth, brow! Be smiling, lip! Be tender, eyes! Be soft, voice! And now to go and pacify the old man, before his vexation betrays me to the others. Ah! it is well *they* have never witnessed my excitement. Come, in time I shall learn to curb wild impulses, and only spring upon my prey when time and place is fit."

Soft, smooth, fascinating, seductive, she glided from her chamber out into the upper piazza, where the old man's slow and heavy footfall was heard—she glided after him, and with an air of sweet, familiar, childish freedom she raised his arm, and, putting her beautiful head under it, drew his hand around her neck and over her bosom, and, looking up pleadingly, simply into his benevolent face, murmured merely, "I am so sorry, Mr. Clifton."

"Never mind, never mind, my dear!" said the old gentleman, stooping and kissing her brow.

"Oh, but I *am so sorry!*"

"You, child! Do you think I mind your little petulance?"

"Oh, you are good, you are good! Indeed, I'm quite unworthy of you," she whispered softly, pressing her head against his bosom, and clinging close.

"You, darling!" cried the old man, stroking her curls in delight.

"I am such an irritable, petulant child, I am sure no one would have patience with me but you—that is the reason I love you so."

"You do love me, then?" gazing fondly in her witching face.

"Oh, dearly, dearly! Look in my eyes and see if I don't!"

"Yes, I know you do, my pet. And I love you entirely."

"Ah, how can you, then? I have so many faults."

"I love your little faults, and all. Come, brighten up Never mind. I love to see my darling bright and cheerful."

"Ah! how can I, when I remember my fit of ill temper!"

"Say no more about it, my love. That's the reason why I love you—for those very little gusts of temper. They are followed by such a sweet reaction, and then my child is so frank, so ingenuous in her little penitence!"

"Ah! But then I am such a spoiled child, and always was. Father spoiled me; and now you spoil me worse than ever!"

"My sweet! you can't be spoiled, you are so ingenuous! But now tell me, what vexed my little girl this evening? Come, let me hear?" asked the old man, caressing the syren.

"Well, now, it was this. I thought you loved Carolyn and Zuleime better than me!" replied the artful woman, gazing half-reproachfully, half-pleadingly up into his smiling face.

"Love Carolyn and Zuleime better than you! Why, you jealous little witch!" exclaimed the old man in rapture. "Love *them* more than you! Why, I have to pray Heaven's pardon daily for not loving them a hundredth part as much! Kiss me."

Georgia nerved her loathing heart to give the demanded kiss, and then went and joined the party in the parlour, as beautiful, smooth, seductive, dangerous as ever; while the old man walked up and down the piazza, smiling to himself and saying, "She is a child—nothing but a child—a sweet, wilful, witching child!"

Alas! little recking of the household treachery, the household wreck, that "child" was preparing!

CHAPTER VI.

THE RUPTURED TIE.

WHAT ruin a single spark of fire may spread, if carelessly or designedly dropped amid combustible or inflammable material!

What desolation a single word may cause, if thoughtlessly or intentionally let fall into a passionate, impetuous heart!

The three scenes I am about to describe took place very nearly as they are related.

But, first, a few words of explanation.

I feel that I have scarcely done justice to the character of Carolyn Clifton, in presenting her only by that cold and frosty crust of pride, which was but the superficial covering of a high-spirited, honourable nature. Her manners were cold and haughty, almost scornful and arrogant, it is but too true. And most people, her family included, supposed her to be destitute of sensibility. Perhaps she was lacking in warmth of affection for her immediate domestic circle. Her whole heart, with all its deep, profound, untold, unguessed devotion, was given to Archer Clifton; and while secretly bestowing upon him her entire, undivided love, she openly exacted a full, unshared return—an exclusive worship.

In truth, in her proud, secret heart, she *was* a little jealous of Clifton's affection for his mother! *She* did not love her *father* so devotedly! Why should *Clifton* worship his *mother* so? To this jealousy she had never given breath, of course—indeed, to her own passionate love she had never yet given word—preferring, in her high-toned, maiden pride, to leave it to be inferred. She had never even *looked* her jealousy; yet Mrs. Clifton, with the fine instinct of a woman and a mother, guessed it, and, in her presence, skilfully eluded all demonstrations of affection from her son. And so well was the proud, exacting spirit of Miss Clifton known in her own family, that even the sprightly and mischievous outlaw, Zuleime, dared take no childish liberty with her sister's betrothed. Thus it happened that Frank Fairfax's unlucky jest had deeply offended the arrogant lady, the more especially as in that day, and in that neighbourhood, the term "mountain-girl" was too often the mildest name for an evil woman. This fact, of course, Frank was not acquainted with; and therefore it was that he could not understand Carl Kavanagh's excessive anxiety to send his young sister off the mountain, and could not in the least comprehend the intense indignation of Miss Clifton, and the difficulty Archer Clifton had in restoring her good-humour. Even now Carolyn Clifton had not forgotten the circumstance; and, truth to tell, she was not well pleased at the continued interest displayed by Captain Clifton for his *protégée*, in bringing her and her family upon his mother's plantation. But she was too proud

again to allude to the subject. Carolyn Clifton had never known a care or a contradiction in her life. Her heart was a sound, strong, high, proud thing, and therefore very like to break itself without fear full tilt against the first impediment that opposed it. She was, besides, like all women of her fair complexion and fine-tempered nerves, "a discerner of spirits;" and this quick, delicate, and sure perception never failed her, except when she was agitated and blinded by inward passion Thus, perhaps, quite unconsciously, she read the heart of he betrothed, and knew it better than he did himself; and thus perhaps, involuntarily, she afterwards acted on that know ledge.

At all events, there was quite enough combustible materi on hand for a single spark to ignite it and spread a con flagration.

And the spark, and many sparks, were not wanting. A thoughtless jest of Frank's, a slight word dropped by Georgi at exactly the right, or rather the *wrong* time and place, an the whole neighbourhood of R—— County were agog witl gossip; and Captain Clifton and his *protégée* were the subjects Some, right in the face of his well-known engagement to Mis Clifton, did not hesitate to say that she, his *protégée*, was a beautiful girl, whom he intended to educate and marry, and that his republican mother was highly in favour of the plan. Others told how tastefully the overseer's house had been furnished and adorned, and, without the slightest foundation in truth, how many hours a day Captain Clifton now spent with his interesting pupil. The suspicious and malignant circulated a still darker tale, and wondered how long it would last, and how it would all end. And then they denounced Captain Clifton, blamed his mother, and pitied Miss Clifton! And all this time, while the whole county was ringing with various and contradictory reports, the persons most concerned knew nothing about it; until, the day before the wedding, it was suddenly brought to the knowledge of both parties in the following manner.

The company assembled at Clifton, consisting of old Mr. Clifton's brother-in-law and sister, Judge and Mrs. Cabell, of Richmond, with their three daughters and son, Frank Fairfax, Zuleime, and Captain Clifton, had gone over to dine, by previous engagement, with Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain. Carolyn Clifton had been compelled, by a slight headache, to

remain at home; and Georgia had chosen to stay to keep her company. The two ladies sat in the dressing-room of Miss Clifton. Carolyn was silent and abstracted, yet her countenance betrayed more of inward joy than she suspected. A great contrast was her fair, placid face to that of Georgia, dark, and traversed by spasms of pain-like clouds hurling past a stormy sky. But if Carolyn lifted her fair lashes a moment, instantly that dark face cleared, ere its expression could be detected. At length she ventured, in a sweet tone, to say—

"Carolyn, my dear, to-morrow is your wedding-day; and —but—there is something which you ought to know beforehand, and which, for weeks past, I have been trying to gain courage to tell you."

"Well, madam?" asked Miss Clifton, slowly lifting her snowy lids.

"I should—that is, I *might*—expose myself to the resentment of all your family by telling you."

"Then you had best not tell me, madam."

"And yet you ought to be informed, and must. *I* should never forgive a friend for keeping such a secret from me."

A vague fear and tremor seized upon Carolyn Clifton and kept her silent. The dark lady went on.

"I think the honour, the happiness, even the tranquillity of your married life depends upon your previous knowledge of this circumstance."

"Madam, the honour, happiness, and tranquillity of my married life pass into the keeping of my husband, Captain Clifton, and in him I have the utmost confidence," remarked Carolyn coldly and proudly, though, alas! not *truly*.

"Heaven forbid that I should unnecessarily mar that confidence! But, my love, you will be sure to hear it when too late, and from less friendly lips than mine!"

"Will it please you, then, madam, to speak out frankly and honestly, and let us know what it is?" said Carolyn scornfully, at the same time that her heart was rising with emotion.

"Is it possible you do not guess?"

"I do not take the trouble to do so, Mrs. Clifton."

"Ah! you have always treated me with scorn and hauteur, Miss Clifton. Yet that, alas! does not relieve me of the painful duty of putting you on your guard. In a word, then,

do you understand the nature of the relations subsisting between Captain Clifton and the sister of his mother's overseer?"

The brow of Carolyn Clifton flushed crimson, but she answered coldly, "Madam, I believe that young person has been the object of Captain Clifton's benevolence."

"Ah! I believe so, too. His benevolence is certainly indisputable, and his honour *should* be above suspicion!" exclaimed Georgia fervently.

"Madam, *it is!*" coldly replied Miss Clifton.

"Yes; and yet, Carolyn, my love, a poor and beautiful young maiden cannot continue to be the recipient of a handsome young officer's beneficence with credit to herself, honour to him, or *peace* or safety to his wife!"

"Is she so very beautiful?" was the question surprised from the haughty girl.

"Passing beautiful, I think, Carolyn; and this it is that makes the country gentlemen jest so about the matter. *They* give a far different motive than benevolence to the kindness of Captain Clifton to his lovely charge. *I* know that they do him gross injustice! But this thing should not go on; it is a dangerous relation—dangerous to Archer's own fidelity—dangerous to your peace, and most dangerous of all to the poor girl's reputation. I advise you to speak to Archer. I would do so myself, but it is too delicate a matter for me to speak to a young gentleman about. Now, in these palmy days of courtship, he may listen to you as he never would, perhaps, afterwards; and you will be able to prevail with him to send this dangerous young beauty, his *protégée*, away. Yes; and you may tell Archer that *I* advise this for the good of all parties. Tell him that the whole neighbourhood is ringing with gossip that may become slander. Tell him that I say the parties most concerned in this rumour, or in any rumour, will be ever the last to hear it. Tell him that I, his friend Georgia, venture to do him this service, informing him through you. Let there be no concealments—let all be open candour. I did feel afraid when I began to tell you this; but now it is out I feel relieved—I have more courage."

"Madam," said Carolyn more haughtily than before, "Captain Clifton is quite capable of directing his own conduct; and, if he were *not*, I should never resign to him the

future control of mine; and, farthermore, madam," she added sarcastically, "I too highly honour the man about to become my husband—I have too much self-respect and delicacy—to inquire into the nature of Captain Clifton's individual and private amusements, whether they relate to hounds, horses, or beggar-girls! I leave such investigations to—*the daughter of the sign-painter!*" and, with an air of the greatest possible scorn and arrogance, she arose and left the room. Yet, under that proud, disdainful bearing, a thousand scorpions of doubt and jealousy maddened her soul. She went at once into her own room, and having locked the door that no rash intruder should look upon her weakness, gave herself up to the anguish of her emotions—now pacing up and down the floor, wringing her hands in distraction—now throwing herself, face downward, upon the bed in despair. And yet she had no confidence in Mrs. Clifton's honesty of purpose either.

—

In the meantime, the party assembled at Hardbargain were enjoying themselves, and the hospitalities of their hostess, to the fullest extent.

The late dinner was over; the ladies were lounging about in arm-chairs, or on sofas, in the breezy parlour, dozing, reading, or chatting in low tones, all serenely enjoying that pleasant feeling of home freedom and repose into which Mrs. Clifton ever charmed her guests.

The gentlemen had left their wine, and in parties of two and three were strolling about the shady yard, or out through the fields and orchards, to cool their heads, previous to joining the ladies at the tea-table.

Archer Clifton, with his cousin, Major Charles Cabell, and Frank Fairfax, took the wooded path leading down the south side of the ridge to a fine spring in the hollow They came to a log-cabin half hidden by surrounding and overhanging elms, and literally covered with climbing and creeping vines. Before the door sat a girl, spinning on a little wheel, who, at the first glimpse of strangers, instantly arose, and, taking up her wheel, retired into the house. Captain Clifton left his companions, and, going up to the door, called, saying, "Catherine, my good girl, bring me a gourd here."

Kate Kavanagh came, and, with her eyes fixed upon the

ground, and her face suffused with a deep blush, handed the required article, and instantly disappeared within.

"By all the angels, what a fine face!" exclaimed Major Cabell, gazing after her.

Archer Clifton shot a quick, piercing glance at the speaker, who, meeting it full as he turned, laughed, exclaiming, as if a new discovery had been made, "Oh! Ay! Soh! you are *there*, are you? So, then, this is the mountain beauty, the hidden treasure of Archer Clifton, that has set all the country ladies agog with scandal, and all the country gentlemen mad with envy?"

The hot blood rushed to Clifton's brow.

"Oh, now, don't be jealous! Don't be alarmed! Your treasure is safe from me, though, by all the queens of chivalry, hers is a noble face—a face to bleed and die for! None of your pretty lily-and-rose baby beauties that may be seen by hundreds anywhere, but a noble girl, fit for a monarch's love and counsellor!"

In an instant Archer Clifton strode up and stood with bended brow and folded arms before him, and said in a low, deep, stern tone of concentrated passion, "You are my relative, friend, guest! Your threefold claim upon my forbearance should protect you from any resentment for words spoken against *my* honour. But, I charge you, retract your words! And if you harbour one single suspicion against that young girl, you are a villain! S'death, sir! has the world come to such a pass, and is the honour of Archer Clifton of so little worth, that he cannot protect a poor young maiden without injury to her? By Heaven, be warned! For if you do but breathe one breath to dim the lustre of that girl's good name, by the good Lord that made us good, and the demon that turned us to evil, relative, friend, and guest, as you are, I will slay and drag you to her feet to die!"

So sudden, so mighty, so appalling was this burst of passion, that for a moment after it was over Cabell and Fairfax stood as if transfixed with astonishment. Then Cabell, in the frankest way in the world, held out his hand, exclaiming, "I like that, d—d if I don't! Come, Clifton! I was wrong—forgive me; give me your hand! By my soul, I like a man that will stand up for—there! by all that's fatal, I had liked to have tripped again!"

"Understand me, sir," said Archer Clifton sternly. "You know me to be on the eve of marriage with our cousin. She is my liege lady, and never for one instant, in thought, word, or deed, has my allegiance swerved from her service. And more, gentlemen, both! A single word touching the fair fame of *her*—of Catherine, I mean—touches *me home*."

They were here overtaken by two or three other gentlemen, and the conversation took another and less perilous turn, as they wandered down towards the mineral spring. After slaking their thirst, the party divided. Major Cabell joined the three latest comers, and Clifton and Fairfax turned towards the farmhouse.

"You seem to be moody this evening, Archer," said Frank, after they had pursued their way for some time in silence.

"Yes; that foolish jest of Cabell's has annoyed me. It is villanous! It is diabolical! Such light words, in which a young girl's fair fame is laughed and jested away, may be thoughtless; but they should be punished with death!"

"That's a harsh sentence!"

"A *just* one!"

"You feel this bitterly!"

"I DO; for *her* name has been used! Frank, you believe that, if a word of disrespect were to be breathed by any man against my mother, I would lay that man dead at my feet without an instant's grace?"

"Yes! I thoroughly believe that you would send such an one to his last account in a great hurry."

"And if anyone were but to *look* an insult to Catherine, it would rouse all the ferocity of the demon in me to overthrow and trample him to death!"

"'All this I stedfastly believe,' as the catechism says about total depravity!"

"And, Frank, you yourself have sometimes spoken flippantly of my regard for that girl—never so insultingly as Cabell did just now, else you would not now possess my esteem and friendship; but you have *trifled* with the subject. Now understand, Frank, that I shall consider it a deep personal affront in future if you repeat it!"

"You haven't heard me joke to you about Kate for a long time."

"No, I certainly have not."

"No; for be hanged if the matter is not getting far too *serious* for jesting!"

"What do you mean?"

"Archer! Have you never heard it said that those whom it concerns *first* to be made acquainted with an injurious report are usually the *last* to hear it; and when they are innocent, they are the more exposed for *being* innocent, because they never suspect the slander, and never guard against it?"

"In Heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"This. Cabell's jest was but the echo of the whole county talk. I have been asked, I suppose, twenty times, by twenty different young men, to tell them all about our adventure upon the mountain."

"That was because *you* first of all represented it as an adventure."

"I confess it—in shame and confusion I confess it," replied Fairfax. "But then many times I am also asked what is the precise nature of the relations subsisting between yourself and this girl?"

"No, NO!"

"Yes, I tell you!"

"No! no one dares to question that!"

"But they *do*, I tell you! Ay, and answer their own questions in a manner that reflects very little honour upon the parties!"

"Would God I had never seen the girl! Would God I had never brought her here! I would give my right hand rather than evil should befall her! But WHO is it that dares slander her? Tell me! Give me some name! Let me have SOME one to make an example of!"

"Nay, Clifton; you can't make an example of women and children!" said Frank evasively.

"By Heaven, sir, they have husbands and fathers, who shall be held accountable for the licence of tongue they allow their wives and daughters!"

"Nay, now, Archer! This is a mere matter of gossip, that will die out if you are discreet!"

"To dare to talk of *her!* They never looked upon her face! Else they never could associate the thought of evil with that noble brow, those thoughtful eyes, and serious lips! To slander *her!*"

"Nay, nay, it is not slander; only what I am afraid should *become* such. It is only fun, joke—"

"To dare to joke of *her!*"

"*Her!* Verily, Clifton, anyone to hear you breathe *her*, with your full soul's volume poured into the little word, would think there was but one *her* in the world! Archy, you take a very strange interest in that girl. Are you sure that you are not in love with her?"

"In love with her! Nonsense; she is a child!"

"Well, then, are you sure you should not be in love with her, if she were a woman?"

"Ridiculous! She is a low-born girl!"

"Oh, I forgot! I beg pardon. You demonstrated that to me before."

"And, besides, sir, please to remember that all my love and faith are due to my cousin, Miss Clifton; and that *she* has my whole heart. I love, admire, honour my beautiful betrothed bride; nor for her proud sake will I brook that anyone should think it possible that I could, even in thought, fail in full loyalty to my liege lady. But, Frank, my soul's dear brother! as I tell you everything, I will tell you this, that I feel the very deepest interest in Catherine's welfare. If you ask me why, I tell you I do not know. It surprises and confounds myself. But from the first moment I looked upon her noble face, I felt that interest stir within my deepest soul; and it has never since ceased."

"I swear you are enamoured of her!"

"Preposterous, Frank! you make me angry! It is a very different thing from being enamoured of her, let me tell you. There is my beautiful but cold and scornful bride up at Clifton. Well, I am the most patient of all adoring slaves. I wait upon her sovereign eyes all day long. I am proud to submit to her whims—to do her lightest bidding, and pick up her lap-dog—or to obey her severest command, and exile myself from her gracious presence all day long! But now observe the difference. I feel a deep, strong, strange interest in Kate. I cannot account for it. I feel a sort of unratified right of property in her. I wish to do her good; but I wish that all the good she may ever possess in the world may come from only me; and that, for all good things with which I cannot supply her, she may *suffer* the want rather than owe their possession to another. Very

like *love*, is it not? But I wish to control her destiny. I wish to have her in my power—*in all honour, however*. It galls me to think that I have no right of authority or guardianship over her. I ardently desire such a right. I long to have the disposal of her person and fate. I crave with a frantic craving to have more than a father's, more than a husband's, more than a master's right over her. I would to God she were born mine—my own, body, soul, and spirit!—my own to use or abuse, to crown or kill, as I listed!" exclaimed Clifton passionately, while his cheeks and very lips were white and dry, and his eyes burned with a fierce, consuming, inward fire. And forgetting all things real, he felt, as in a vision, a girl's spirit swoop down upon his bosom, and a dream-voice murmur in his ear, "Oh, if it will give you one instant's joy to press me strongly to your heart, crush me to death in the fold, and my soul will exhale in rapture to heaven!" The fervid vision came and passed like lightning, and Clifton roused himself from reverie, with a smile and a sneer, saying, "Very like love, all that! is it not?"

But as Frank did not reply, and as they had now arrived at the gate leading into the yard, the conversation ceased.

The early tea-table was set out under the shade of the great oaks, and the ladies were walking about, taking the evening air in the yard. As supper was only waiting the arrival of Captain Clifton and Mr. Fairfax, it was now speedily served.

After tea was over, the carriages were all brought round, and the company took leave of Mrs. Clifton and departed.

Captain Clifton and Mr. Fairfax were the last to leave. They mounted their horses and took the bridle-path down the mountain-side. This separated them from the rest of their party, who went by the road. They did not, however, converse. Frank was thoughtful, and Clifton himself buried in a deep reverie.

It was quite early when they arrived at White Cliffs; and the remainder of the party had not yet arrived. Mr. Fairfax joined Mrs. Clifton in the garden, and Archer Clifton sought his lady-love, where he was informed he would find her, namely, in the summer-saloon. He threw down his hat and entered hurriedly, intending to surprise from her a hasty kiss. Carolyn was standing looking out of the window upon

the rich sunset scene—the last sun that would set upon her maiden life, perhaps, she thought. On seeing Clifton, she moved away, and retreated to the work-table, at which she seated herself. Clifton approached, and, with an air of gallantry, half-serious, half-playful, kneeled upon one knee and kissed her hand. She drew it coldly away—but that was the custom of the "proud ladie," and did not surprise her lover. He arose and drew a chair to her side and seated himself, and began to affect an interest in her little lady-like occupations. Her right hand rested upon a pile of beautifully fine linen cambric handkerchiefs—an item in the imported *trousseau*. He laid his hand upon hers, and asked her some trivial questions about them.

Now, Carolyn, after a day's extreme suffering, had almost gained a victory over her passion. Her haughtiness had almost saved her. Not to one soul in that house, not to Georgia, had she betrayed the least sign of the cruel suspicion that had nearly maddened her brain. Not for all Clifton, not for all the world, would she have betrayed her passion to her lover, or condescended to admit that she could be jealous of him; for she felt that once to accuse him would be to impose upon her the necessity of breaking with him. How could she, in honour, marry a man to-morrow whom to-day she had accused of treachery? Besides, she was not sure, could never be sure, of his moral dereliction. And while there was a doubt in his favour, she must conquer or conceal all suspicion, or, letting it escape, must break with him, even at this last moment—must break with him for ever! At least so her high spirit and her pride argued. She could not part with him—pride forbade that also. What! the marriage of Miss Clifton of Clifton broken off at the last moment, and all about a mountain-girl? Pah! Forbid it, all the shades of all the buried Cliftons! Hearts might break, but haughty heads must not be bowed! Better lost peace than lost place! And then she loved him—loved him the deeper for suppressing all signs of love—and she could not bear to lose him: and banish him she must, if she should once betray the jealous passion of her heart. This mighty motive kept down the rising storm. Yet all depended upon her vigilant self-control. Should a look, a word of suspicion, escape her then, she felt the curbed frenzy of her soul would have broken all bounds; even as by the smallest fracture in the

dyke, the mighty and irresistible sea is let in upon the land, carrying destruction and death before it. All depended on her silence. So, to keep her lover from noticing her mood, or fatally inquiring its cause, and to give him employment, she pushed the pile of handkerchiefs towards him, saying calmly, "Mark them for me."

Clifton smilingly took them, found the little vial of indelible ink, and went to work—himself well pleased to have some service to perform for his liege lady that would, without disrespect to *her*, deliver *him* from the duty of keeping up a running conversation, for which he felt indisposed.

She need not have feared that Archer Clifton would observe her mood. He himself was too abstracted, too thoughtful, to be critical or inquisitive. He was deeply troubled by the recollection of the conversations of the afternoon, affecting Kate Kavanagh. Instead of benefiting, had he really wronged that excellent girl? darkened the very morning of her just opening life with the clouds of suspicion? And was even his mother's protection insufficient to shield her innocence from such attacks of slander? Yes! for the *fact* of his mother's protection was not even acknowledged. Slander shuts its eyes to truth, while it opens its lips to falsehood. Should he send her back to the mountain, and expose her to all the evils of that life? No, no! his whole heart protested against that course. Yet what to do to save her? He could not decide then. He could not even get his own consent to consult his mother. What! wound *her* ear with the repetition of such a story? Never! His usual promptitude of decision and action forsook him quite. A cry was in his heart, and he could only repeat to himself her *name* in deep sorrow, "O Kate! Kate! Kate Kavanagh!" until her very name, "*Kate Kavanagh*," became the refrain of a plaintive *silent* melody! Meantime he pursued his occupation quite mechanically, marking and laying down, one by one, the handkerchiefs, until the whole dozen was complete.

Carolyn Clifton watched his complete and mournful abstraction with increasing suspicion.

When all the handkerchiefs were marked, he took the parcel, and, shaking off sad thought, smilingly laid them before his lady's eyes, gaily intreating her to examine his

work, and reward him with a kindly word if it should please her.

Miss Clifton took up the parcel; her eyes fell upon the topmost handkerchief, and she started violently. She swiftly turned it over and looked at the second, and the blood rushed to her brow! At the third, and it receded again, leaving her pale as death! She hurriedly went through the dozen; then springing to her feet, she hurled the parcel to the floor, and, setting her heel upon it, lifted her proud form to its loftiest height, and stood, her chest expanded, her head thrown back, her cheek kindling, her eyes blazing—full! full!—yet proudly suppressing all utterance of passion! Captain Clifton started to his feet, exclaiming "Carolyn, my dear cousin!"

But spurning the parcel from beneath her heel, she turned imperiously away, and walked up the room.

He followed her, repeating, "Carolyn, my dearest Carolyn! what is it?"

Turning and flashing upon him her fierce, imperious eyes, she stretched out her arm, and pointed in scornful silence to the handkerchiefs on the floor.

He went and picked them up to examine them. Oh! treacherous absence of mind! Oh! fatal refrain of the mental malady! Oh! horror of horrors! Catastrophe of catastrophes! Upon every handkerchief was beautifully marked, "KATE KAVANAGH:"

——confirmation strong
As proof of Holy Writ.

Ay, and a great deal stronger, as sight is more convincing than faith! What was to be done? It was in vain to deny or attempt to explain it! Yet he must try, even if he should make himself ridiculous. Hurling the fatal handkerchiefs down with violence, he sprang to the side of the outraged and indignant beauty, seized her hand, exclaiming vehemently, "My dearest love—pardon! pardon! This is all a mistake!"

Spurning his clasp from her hand, she turned away in arrogant silence.

Dropping upon one knee, he took her hand again, and, looking up in her face, said in a voice of intreaty, "My Carolyn! this is all a mistake! the most absurd mistake!

The effect of the merest absence of mind! The most ridiculous thing!"

"Oh, sir!" she answered, with slow and withering scorn, drawing her hand away again, "I do not doubt it was a mistake. I never supposed you would dare an intentional insult to my father's daughter!"

"But, Carolyn, my dearest cousin, only permit me to explain—"

"Oh, sir, I *intreat* you spare me the humiliation of hearing the story!" she sneered, with curling lip.

"But, Carolyn, my dear-loved bride—my bride that will be to-morrow—if you will allow me to tell you all the simple truth—the *reason* why this young girl's name ran in my head so."

"Oh, sir!" she exclaimed, raising both hands, and turning away her head in loathing, "I *implore* you! I most *humbly beseech* you to forbear! Spare me *details* that might shock my—delicacy!"

"Carolyn," he said, gravely and reproachfully rising, and taking her hand, "this does not become you."

Throwing off his hand with scorn and indignation, she replied, "It would less become me, sir, to listen to the history you would tell!" Then subsiding into a mood of contemptuous irony, she said, with a sneering smile, "Believe me, sir, I feel more disgusted at your bad taste than shocked at your sin, or wronged by your bad faith. A *mountain-girl!* Truly, I am humiliated to think so base a rival should have moved me, even to contempt. I am dishonoured, sir, in that. Had your wandering fancy fixed upon one of my cousins, one of the elegant Misses Cabell, I might have mourned your infidelity, but should have been saved this deep humiliation for myself, and this utter contempt for you. But a *mountain-girl!* a coarse, ignorant, ill-bred mountain-girl! Oh that you should have stooped, or I should have been moved, by so low a creature as that! I could bury my head with shame!"

"Carolyn!" he said sternly, "permit me to inform you—"

"No, sir!" she exclaimed, scorn writhing her lips, indignation flashing from her eyes. "No, sir! You shall tell me NOTHING! It would ill become my mother's daughter to listen to the revolting history of—your base amour with the mountain-girl!"

Yes, in the bitterness of her passion, she forgot her maiden delicacy, and spoke those shameful words to his astonished ears!

"Miss Clifton!" he replied severely, folding his arms, and gazing sternly and steadily into her blushing face, for she was already blushing for her temerity, until she quailed before him, "Miss Clifton, you mistake my purpose. I have no intention *now* to explain anything. The man who would condescend to *deny* so base a crime as you have charged upon me is not too high or pure to commit it. Therefore I deign to say nothing for myself. But for the admirable girl that you have slandered, I will say this: had a *man* dared to asperse the fair fame of Catherine Kavanagh, though that man had been my bosom friend, he should have expiated his falsehood with his life. Had any other *woman* breathed a breath of slander on her, her husband or her father should have atoned for the fault. For yourself, Miss Clifton, you shall retract your words before ever I shall call you wife!"

This roused her passion to ungovernable fury. Turning ghastly white, while the light seemed to leap from her eyes, she exclaimed in a low, deep, intense tone, "DEATH, sir! Do you threaten me? Insult me in my father's house? Leave it! You are unworthy to stand upon this floor! BEGONE!" And, reaching out her hand, she seized the bell-cord, and rang a peal that presently brought a servant to the door. The advent of a third party, though that party was a menial, constrained the lady to remember herself. Miss Clifton was her cold, serene, dignified self again. Turning to the servant, she said haughtily, "Show Captain Clifton to the front door, and bring round his horse instantly. He returns to Hardbargain to-night." And she bowed to Clifton, and calmly and imperiously walked from the room.

The man stood waiting and bowing. Captain Clifton snatched his hat, saying, "Let my horse be brought round without delay, Dandy, and tell your master, when he returns, that he shall hear from me at Hardbargain."

When the man had bowed and retired, Captain Clifton passed out through the open leaf of the window into the piazza, and thence down into the lawn, to speak to Frank, who was just entering from the garden with Mrs. Clifton on his arm.

Georgia saw at a glance that her train of gunpowder had caught, and the magazine had blown up; and her dark, beautiful, demoniac, witching face lighted up with a lurid joy for one unguarded instant, and then all was self-recollection, self-control, and sweet, smooth, serene, alluring glamour.

Bowing deeply to Mrs. Clifton, he said, "Madam, an unexpected event sends me from Clifton this evening. Pray make my adieux to my uncle and cousin. And permit me to commend my friend here to your hospitable care until such time as he pleases to become my guest at Hardbargain, if, indeed, he will not ride thither with me to-night," he added, turning to Frank.

Fairfax was too surprised to speak.

Mrs. Clifton, who was not surprised at all, yet affected much interest, said archly, "Oh, but we shall see you back very early to-morrow morning!"

"I regret to add, madam, that it is not likely," he said, with another bow; then turning to Frank, he asked, "Will you ride with me to-night, Fairfax?"

Frank glanced at the lady on his arm, and then looking rebukingly at Clifton, begged to be excused.

"Well, then, you are my guest, Fairfax, and my mother has often pressed you to give her a few weeks of your company. Join me at Hardbargain as soon as possible—the sooner the better. To-morrow, even."

"*To-morrow!*" archly smiled the wily lady. "To-morrow, I fancy, his attendance and your own will be required *here*. Do you *forget?* Well, that is the worst instance of absence of mind I *ever* saw or heard of! A young bridegroom to forget, for an instant, his wedding-day! Too bad, even for *you*, the notoriously absent-minded Archer Clifton!"

Not wishing to enter into explanations, Captain Clifton merely replied with another bow—a most convenient, safe and polite manner of answer, since, without lack of courtesy, it committed nothing.

Then, taking leave of both lady and gentleman, and repeating his invitation to Frank, he turned and went to take his horse from the servant that held it, threw himself up into the saddle, and, with a parting wave of his hat, rode away at full speed.

"Clifton looks darkly—what can be the matter?" asked Frank.

"Oh, nothing! Probably Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain has been troubled with some refractory servant, and has sent for her son to come up and reduce him to order; or possibly there may be some dispute or difficulty in settling the demands of the hired harvest-hands. They are often even dishonest in their extortions."

"Deferring to your better judgment, madam, still I fear not! I think such trifles would scarcely have raised so dark a thunder-cloud upon Clifton's brow," said Frank.

"Oh, well! At worst, it is but some lover's quarrel with his most exacting queen, Carolyn!" playfully replied the lady.

Frank was not satisfied—he was pained. This most dangerous dark beauty fascinated and frightened him by turns. He had never seen the fiend in her face since that first night, and her witching power had almost erased the remembrance of it from his mind. Indeed, if he had ever recollected it, it was with wonder and remorse that he should have ever read such fearful meaning in a lady's frown, and he ascribed it to the phantasmagoria of his own fatigued nerves and over-excited brain. But now he felt vaguely anxious, suspicious, foreboding—he scarce knew wherefore. He had no reason to reply to the lady again; for at the instant she finished speaking the carriages drove into the yard, bringing the company from Hardbargain, and they walked forward to welcome them home.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SEVERED HEARTS.

SOME hours after the arrival of the company, old Mr Clifton sat alone in his study, examining piles of accounts, merchants', mechanics', and hired labourers' bills, that had come in as usual upon the first of July, many weeks before, yet had not, up to this night, been settled. For many years past the financial affairs of the master of Clifton had been falling behindhand. The cause of this was that no plantation and plantation house can thoroughly succeed without the personal superintendence of an efficient *mistress* to assist the master's effort. Often, indeed, it happens that, while the

master himself is engaged in state politics, or off at the Legislature, or at Congress, or on the circuit as a judge of the court, or in the metropolis of the state, or of the nation, holding some high office under the Government, the mistress, at home upon the plantation, is the main-spring of all its business—superintending, not only the house and house-maids, with their multifarious cares and avocations, such as a city housewife cannot conceive of, but managing the plantation also—keeping the overseer to his duty, adjudging equitably all difficulties that may arise between him and the slaves under his charge, looking over all the numerous accounts, paying debts, and, when necessary, retrenching expenses. Now, the Clifton plantation had been singularly unfortunate in a series of inefficient mistresses, even before it fell in regular succession to the present Mr. Clifton; and after that, affairs were worse than ever. His first wife, the haughty Miss Gower, the mother of Carolyn, was far too great a lady to look after a housekeeper and overseer, and her successors had been all young girls, very worthless, except as pets and playthings, and who had, besides, to be indulged every year with their winters in Richmond, or in Washington—a twofold evil, as it took the master from his plantation and men, and the mistress from her house and maids, and laid them, besides, under the heavy expense of city hotel living, dressing, dinner-giving, theatres, balls, concerts, &c. Once in a while, as a bridal treat, or at the successive "coming out" of daughters, a winter in the metropolis may be well enough; but when continued year after year, through a lifetime, to the total neglect of the plantation, the revenues of no ordinary estate will hold out. So it followed that, as the master and mistress ceased to look after the overseer and the housekeeper, the overseer and housekeeper ceased to look after the men and maids, and the men and maids grew careless and indolent in the performance of their duties. Thus, as the expenses rose, the income fell. And thus, at the present time, old Mr. Clifton was almost irredeemably in debt, and all the Clifton property, except the land, mortgaged to its full value. The mortgage might foreclose at any instant; and at this present moment, the poor old master of great Clifton had not the ready money to pay his harvest-hands. The extent of his liabilities was, however, so little known in the neighbourhood, that his credit was still good, and almost

high; and the estate of White Cliffs was still considered as one of the most prosperous in the county, and the owners still held as very enviable people. While old Mr. Clifton sat pondering most dismally over his impracticable accounts, the study door was suddenly thrown open, and Miss Clifton entered in great excitement, and threw herself into a chair before her father, exclaiming, "Father, I have been insulted!"

The old man, never indifferent to his children's cry, ever ready, in the midst of his own real cares, to hear and sympathise even with their fantastic griefs, looked up from his papers in perplexity, inquiring, "What is it? What did you say, my child?"

"I have been insulted, outraged, sir!"

The old man gazed at her in surprise, repeating, "Insulted! outraged!"

"Yes, sir! contemned, despised, scorned, insulted, outraged, *rejected!*"

The old man placed his hands upon the arms of the chair, and gazed in astonishment, exclaiming, "Insulted! outraged! Whom? You, my daughter! Miss Clifton! *Impossible!*"

"Yes, sir! me, your daughter, Carolyn Clifton!"

"Who has presumed—who has dared—"

"Captain Clifton, sir, has dared!" replied the indignant beauty, rising in her excitement.

The old gentleman stared at her in blank wonder for a minute, and then, taking her hand, "Sit down, sit down, sit down, sit down," he kept repeating, "and tell me all about it."

Carolyn drank a glass of ice-water that stood near her on the table, and then, in a cooler manner, told her father exactly what had passed, and how it had finally ended.

The old gentleman scratched his snow-white head in vexation and perplexity, but the winter bloom of his broad, rosy face was neither heightened nor lowered at the hearing of the tale. He did not by any means display the indignation the offended beauty had expected.

"Well, sir!" at last she said rather haughtily, "what do you say to this?"

He put his arm fondly around her waist, and drew her to him, saying caressingly, "You're a fool, Carolyn—a vain, jealous little fool, that's all! Nay, now, no airs

with your old father. According to your own showing, it has been Archer that has been contemned, despised, scorned, insulted, outraged, rejected, and the rest of it, and upon no just grounds either, as I can easily prove to you. I am very much mortified, deeply humbled, indeed, to hear that my daughter, a high-born young maiden, should have forgotten her feminine pride and delicacy, and reproached her lover with an intimacy with a mountain-girl—a race of women, with very few exceptions, so low and wretched that a young lady should ignore their very existence. O' my conscience, Carolyn! why do you not cover your face, and die with humiliation? I do not wonder a man of such high honour and delicate sensibility as Archer Clifton should have been shocked and disgusted. Nay, my child, no airs with me! No tossing of the head and curling of the lip with me! I am your father. You must listen to me. You have done Archer the most outrageous injustice; and your jealousy is as ridiculous as it is indelicate. In the first place, this girl, though brought up on the mountain, comes of respectable, if humble parentage, and possesses, by all accounts, a higher-toned moral and intellectual nature than most young *ladies* are endowed with. She is as far removed from vice as my own Carolyn. In the second place, she is the *protégée* of *Mrs.* Clifton, as well as of Captain Clifton, and enjoys that excellent lady's esteem and friendship, spending half of every day in her company, except when visitors are at the house. In the third and last place, she is not a beautiful woman, but an ugly child, being scarcely fourteen years of age, and having the ugliest face I ever saw in my life—at least, *I* think so, though Mrs. Clifton says it is a noble face. It has large features, and is full of strength and expression, like a boy's. There, now, that's all. Now what do you think of yourself?"

During this short explanation, Carolyn's beautiful countenance had changed expression as rapidly and as variously as, during the lay of the minstrel, the harp changes and varies its notes. At its close, she dropped down by the side of the old man, and, throwing her arms and her head upon his knees, in utter weakness and dejection, sobbed, "Father, how shall I *ever* be forgiven?"

He raised her to his knee, and, putting his arm around her waist, drew her head upon his bosom, and said, "It

is an ugly lover's quarrel, certainly, my love; and Archer Clifton is as proud as you are. But it must be made up—it must be made up. A very ugly quarrel, indeed; and on the eve of your marriage, too. But it must be made up—it must be made up. Ah! doubtless he will be over to-morrow night. He feels as bad as you do, I'll warrant he does! I'll warrant he does! *I* should, I know, if I were he!"

"Ah, father! no, he does not. He was in the right; I was in the wrong!"

"Yes, you were wrong, Carry; and I hope it will be a lesson to you. But that makes no difference in *his* feelings, not a whit. He suffers as much as you do. Why, when I have a difficulty with my poor little pet, Georgia, if she is ever so wrong, and I ever so right, I am nevertheless the most miserable man alive!"

"Ah, father! but there is a great difference—I am not Archer's pet, but was to be his consort. We, Archer and myself, are nearly equal in station—ay, education, disposition—and so are more responsible for our conduct towards each other," sighed Carolyn, dropping her head dejectedly upon his bosom.

"Oh, well, now, if you are so full of doubts and fears, it is but ten o'clock, I will mount my horse, and ride up to Hardbargain, and knock the young gentleman up—I doubt if he is asleep—and bring him back here to-night!"

"Not for the world! not for ten thousand worlds!" exclaimed the proud girl vehemently.

"Ah, then I don't know what to do with you. Go to bed, and try to sleep; and if you can't do that, ring for the housekeeper, and make her give you some of her nostrums to put you to sleep, and go into a state of non-existence, that shall obliterate the time between this and to-morrow morning. And to-morrow, I'll warrant, Archer will be here to breakfast with us, and to beg *your* pardon for the sins that *you* committed; for that's the end of all lovers' quarrels. No matter who's right and who's wrong, who's sinned against and who's sinning, the gentleman has to do the penance. There, kiss me, and be off with you! And hark ye, Carolyn! don't forget to kneel down and pray Heaven to give you the grace of a meeker temper!"

Carolyn Clifton went to her room and retired to bed, to

heat her pillow with her feverish head, to wet it with her hot tears—to sigh, and groan, and toss, and sob all night. This bitter, bitter quarrel was the first trouble the girl had ever had in all her favoured life. And she was impatient with it, indignant at it. She was angry with herself for her injustice and indelicacy; angry with Clifton for not forcing upon her the explanation she would not consent to receive, but which, had she been forced to hear, would have arrested the quarrel, and saved this cruel suffering; angry at the tedious night, that lingered so long, keeping her in agonising suspense; angry at the morning, that delayed its coming, and bringing her the peace and joy of a reconciliation; and so she tossed, and groaned, and suffered, like one in high fever, while the long, long night was slowly, slowly passing away.

In the meantime Captain Clifton had ridden away, not so angry as shocked, repulsed, and alienated by the unprecedented behaviour of his lady-love. He disliked all demonstrations of emotion, and detested all exhibitions of evil passion in a woman. It was the high-bred delicacy and refinement, the queenly placidity, the cool reserve and stately dignity of Carolyn Clifton that had attracted his first admiration; and though he sometimes gallantly complained of her cruelty, he would not have had her manner one degree warmer. But now this fair, cool, peerless queen o'er herself and her emotions had yielded to passions that might govern a serving-maid—to suspicion, jealousy, and fierce anger—had descended to virulent, vituperative abuse! And henceforth she was discrowned and degraded from her pride of place.

He arrived at Hardbargain, gave his horse in charge of a servant, and entered the house.

The candles were just lighted in the parlour, and Mrs. Clifton and her favourite Kate sat sewing by the work-stand. As he entered, Kate arose, as usual, with the intention of withdrawing; but he signed to her with his hand, and said in a tone of command, "No; stay, Catherine, and once for all give up that habit of retiring as soon as myself or any other visitor enters."

The young girl returned to her seat and resumed her work. Then, with a sort of spirit of persecution upon him, as one would think, he went to the maiden and inquired impatiently,

"*Why* do you always do that? *Why* do you always rise and leave as soon as anyone enters the room?"

She glanced up at him with those large, shy eyes, and instantly veiled them again, while the blush deepened on her cheek. Her heart—her disobedient, rebellious heart, that would not be calm when she bade it—was beating fast against her bosom, as it ever beat when he looked at her or spoke to her. To have saved her soul alive, she could not have put her motive into words, and told him that she ever feared her society, or even her presence, might not be as acceptable to Mrs. Clifton's visitors as it was to that kind lady herself. She only bowed her head and blushed the deeper that she could not answer, and yet deeper still that she felt him gazing on her. He *was* gazing on her!—gazing down on that beautiful dark auburn hair, rippling and glittering under the light of the lamp — on that broad royal forehead, on those even eyebrows and long eyelashes, dropping fine shadows on the glowing cheek—yes! gazing and thinking of Major Cabell's enthusiastic admiration, and wondering why all the world did not agree with him in thinking that countenance grandly beautiful! Yet, even while admiring her so much, he spoke angrily and said, "Catherine, you have a second habit even worse than the first! Lately, you have taken up the practice of not replying to me when I ask you a question; and when you are obliged to raise your eyes to mine, you drop them instantly, as if mine burnt them. Now, I have always disliked and suspected eyes that cannot look freely into *other* eyes!"

At this the very forehead of the girl burned with a crimson flush. Clifton took hold of her hand, which fluttered in his own like a frightened bird, and said in a kinder tone, "Come, my child! see, now, if you can look me honestly in the face, and tell me why you will not talk to me?"

But Kate's distress became so great that Mrs. Clifton interposed, and said, "*Do*, Archer, leave her alone! It does seem to me, son, that you take a malicious pleasure in tormenting that poor girl because she is so shy. Don't mind him, Kate! He has been a tease ever since he was a boy, when he used to pull the ears of kittens and puppy-dogs. Take up your work, child, and hurry on with it. And you, Archer, I am as much surprised as pleased to see you back here tonight. To what am I indebted for the pleasure?"

"My dear mother, I will tell you after a while; let me be quiet now a little time."

And Mrs. Clifton looked up in surprise, and noticed, for the first time, how deeply troubled was Archer Clifton's face. After watching him a few minutes as he sat and watched Kate, she said suddenly, "Oh, I have a letter for you, arrived by the afternoon mail. Henry brought it from the post-office this evening, after you left. Perhaps it was in quest of that you came, and its contents may dispel your uneasiness," and, rising, the lady went to the card-rack hanging above the mantelpiece and brought him a letter, which he tore open and read hastily. Then starting up, he exclaimed, "Good! good! most excellent, most opportune!"

"What is it, my dear Archer? I am very glad it gives you such satisfaction, at any rate! What is it?"

"An order from head-quarters to join my regiment immediately, to take command of a detachment to march within ten days for the Indian frontier, to put down an insurrection there!"

"No!" exclaimed the lady in amazement.

"Yes, indeed, my good mother!" replied Archer Clifton exultingly.

"*No!* you astonish me! Ordered upon active duty, upon distant and dangerous service, at the very time you are about to be married! Call you that opportune, fortunate? *I* call it most *in*opportune, *un*fortunate!"

"Ah! madam, you do not know! What and if my marriage were already broken off! Is it not lucky, I mean providential, that I can join my regiment immediately, and depart for a distant scene and active service, in which I may forget the sorrow and the humiliation!"

"Your marriage broken off? What! now, at the last moment? A marriage that has been looked forward to for so many years to be broken off when everything is ready? Impossible! it cannot be."

"I assure you, upon my word, madam, it is but too true!"

"Why—what—*do* you tell me?" exclaimed the lady in increasing astonishment. "When did it happen? What caused it? Had Mr. Clifton anything to do with it?"

"It happened this evening, after my return to Clifton. Mr. Clifton had nothing whatever to do with it, not having reached home at the time it occurred. It was occasioned

by a most humiliating quarrel between myself and Miss Clifton!"

"Oh, a quarrel! a lovers' quarrel! that is nothing! though, in truth, it surprises me that the calm, proud Carolyn should descend to such a thing, as it does that my own son should deign to take a part in it. But it is really nothing! Such things occur in almost every courtship!"

"And those who quarrel in courtship should never venture upon matrimony."

"Ah! that is an inhuman, unfaithful sentiment, my son! Young people are like other young natures—petulant, vain, irascible, exacting; but life trains them into modesty, sobriety, forbearance. For this quarrel, Archer, it must be adjusted! It shall be to-morrow morning!"

"No, madam, it shall not! This quarrel is irreconcileable, believe me!"

"Pooh, pooh! *What! with Carolyn?* Nonsense!"

"Mother, you shall judge! She has descended from her high place of maidenly pride and delicacy, and, betraying the most revolting phases of suspicion, jealousy, and fierce anger, she has charged me with infidelity, base treachery, and vice!"

"Dreadful! dreadful! as all angry words and acts ever are! *But not unpardonable!* Spoken in the frenzy of passion, they will be retracted to-morrow; and then you must be reconciled. Things must go on as they have been planned; there must be no discreditable exposure of this affray. The marriage must take place, as proposed, to-morrow evening; then, if you *must* join your regiment, why, it will be easily understood that you must; and there will be no reproach, under those circumstances, in leaving your newly-wedded bride under her father's protection!"

"Impossible, madam! Miss Clifton has to-night exhibited her character and disposition in such revolting colours, that I can never, never take her to my bosom!"

"You are angry now, Archer! You will think better of it. I trust in Heaven you may do so before there is an exposure. Think what will be the astonishment of the wedding-company who will assemble to-morrow evening, the mortification of the family at Clifton, and, worse than all, the scandal! the nine days' wonder!"

"I thought my dear mother had too strong a mind to fear

these bugbears of the little, when a just occasion for meeting and braving them occurs."

"But I do not consider this an adequate occasion. That this quarrel will be finally adjusted I firmly believe. And I think it a pity and a shame that to-morrow evening three hundred guests should be disappointed and dispersed, to spread a subject of speculation and scandal all over the country. And this merely because you will yet a little longer indulge your anger!"

"I am not angry, mother. If I were only angry, I should let the marriage go on, if Miss Clifton thought proper to do so; for I should know that my anger would pass away. No, I am not angry, mother, but shocked, repulsed, and totally estranged. I could no more marry Miss Clifton now than I could take any other loathed object to my bosom! The idea makes me shudder!"

"Still I affirm that all this is intense anger, nothing else; and that there will come a reaction. Why, in anger, Archer, the object is as much loathed as in love it is desired; but *that* is temporary, and *this*, I hope, you will find permanent. I hope, at bottom, you respect Carolyn? I esteem her. She has been a spoiled child, but has so many undeveloped good qualities that she only wants the discipline of a little affection to make her a very excellent woman. I shall say no more about this affair to-night, but wait to see what disposition I shall find you in to-morrow."

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and instantly afterwards Henny came in and informed her mistress that Mr. Kavanagh had come to take his sister home.

"Ask Mr. Kavanagh to sit down in the hall. Put up your sewing, Catherine, my dear!" said the lady.

Catherine arose to fold up her work, while Captain Clifton looked very much as if he would like to stop her again.

"Does she not remain with you at night, madam?" he inquired.

"Certainly not—her brother always comes for her at bedtime."

"How early does she come in the morning?"

"She never comes in the morning. Catherine has her own domestic affairs to attend to during the forenoon. She never gets here till late in the afternoon."

"Then I shall not see her to-morrow—not see her again

for many months—perhaps *never* see her again! Come here, Catherine!"

Catherine came to his side, and stood, as usual, with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and her cheek painfully flushed. He took her hand and pressed it in his own, while he said, "Catherine, you have heard all that passed between myself and Mrs. Clifton this evening?"

A quick, short, but not ungraceful nod was all her answer.

"And you know that I am going away on a distant and dangerous service; I leave here very early in the morning—I may never come back, Catherine," he said slowly, looking at her steadily.

Her hand in his grew cold, her cheek paled, her heart stopped still as death; but no word did she speak in reply.

"Catherine, before I go, I intend to give you a command; do you hear me?"

A spasmodic nod was her reply.

"I may be gone many years. In the meanwhile, you will grow up to womanhood, Catherine. Do not have any lovers—*beaux*, as young girls call them—while I am away; and, above all things, do not choose a husband without first consulting me through my mother."

Not knowing what to reply to this, Catherine remained perfectly silent.

"Will you obey me in this, girl?" he asked rather impatiently.

A low, earnest, choking "Yes, sir," was her answer.

"Kiss me, then, for I may never return!" said Archer Clifton, folding her for one moment to his bosom, and pressing a kiss upon her full lips.

But her lips grew cold at the touch—her face paled and fell away from his bosom—her form drooped and sank back over his arm, where she lay like one dead, in a swoon.

Surprised, alarmed, Clifton raised her in both arms, and hastened to the lounge, where he laid her, calling to his mother. The lady came forward without any trepidation, and, bringing a bottle of Hungary water, began to chafe her temples and face, and finally gave that task to Clifton, while she herself loosened Kate's dress.

"What could have been the cause of this, mother? Is
"I subject to these attacks?"

she never knew her to faint before, though I have seen her

under very trying circumstances with that old man, her grandfather."

"What could have occasioned it?"

"Why, the sudden news of your going away on dangerous service, of course," said Mrs. Clifton, as she resumed the bottle, and continued to chafe the girl's face and hands. "The child loves you, Archer; she has a very grateful, affectionate heart, and very strong feelings. She loves us both; and when you bade her good-bye, for a long and perilous absence, is it strange she should have been overcome? When soldiers talk of danger, children may be forgiven for being frightened. Do go and tell Kavanagh that Kate must remain here to-night, and dismiss him."

He went; and before he came back again, Kate, with a long-drawn sigh, had opened her eyes and recovered.

"You must raise her, and take her up stairs, my dear Archer. She must suffer no more agitation to-night," said Mrs. Clifton.

And he lifted the form of Catherine, and took her up stairs, while his mother called Henny. When they had laid the young girl on a bed, and left her to the care of Henny, and had returned to the parlour again, Captain Clifton said, "Mother, take care of that girl! She has been the innocent, unconscious cause of my trouble to-day, but I cannot feel dislike or even indifference towards her. Take care of that humble maiden, mother, as if she were your daughter and my sister. Don't let any rustic beaux come near her, mother. I cannot endure the idea of her marrying, or even being wooed by any low, miserable fellow of her brother's grade. And do not permit any young gentlemen of the neighbourhood to trifle with her heart, or endanger her good name. You know how easily, even without her fault, that sole possession of a poor maiden is lost. The thought that such an unmerited misfortune should befall Kate exasperates me beyond measure, and I feel like quarrelling with the whole order of society!"

"What, you! the proud conservator of rank! Truly, Archer, one would think Carolyn *had some little ground* of complaint!" said the lady, with her little, low, half-dignified, half-jolly laugh.

"This from *you*, mother!" exclaimed Archer Clifton reproachfully. "I thought you knew me better. You *do*

know me better! But I must have some hand in this girl's good fortune."

Mrs. Clifton, who was walking about the room, quietly setting things in order for the night, made no reply, but only smiled; and soon after she lighted a night-lamp, and, placing it in the hand of her son, bade him good-night, and retired to her chamber. Captain Clifton remained pacing up and down the room, in troubled thought, some time after she had left, before seeking his own couch.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOST AFFECTION.

MORNING came at length. Carolyn Clifton arose unrefreshed, weak, dizzy, and sick. This was the first night's rest she had ever lost in her life; and on looking in the glass, habitually the first thing the beauty ever did after rising, she was shocked to see what havoc one night's evil passions had made in her appearance. What a fright she had become! How pale her cheeks! how dragged the muscles! how red, dim, and sunken her eyes! And this upon her wedding-day; and when she had a quarrel to make up with her intended husband, too! When, in fine, every circumstance pressingly demanded that she should appear in the highest beauty. Would Archer Clifton—would that fastidious, artistic worshipper of the beautiful—feel inclined to a reconciliation with such a spectre as herself, she mentally inquired, as she gazed wonderingly, deploringly upon her haggard face? Carolyn was vain, and proud, and scornful—so vain, and proud, and scornful, that she did not know, could not imagine that that very haggard face, haggard with sorrow for the estrangement and the separation, would be a stronger appeal, make a deeper impression, upon the heart of her lover than all the glory of her beauty had ever done. And thus vanity, pride, and scorn punish their subject, not only by depriving her of very much respect and affection she would otherwise have, but by making her insensible of that love and esteem that really does surround her.

Carolyn at length rang for her woman; and after some

little delay she came in, evidently just aroused up out of her sleep, and wondering that her young mistress should summon her before sunrise. But as soon as she saw her lady, her wonder gave way to alarm, and she exclaimed, "My good gracious alive, Miss Carolyn! What's der matter, honey?"

"Has anyone arrived this morning, Aunt Darky?" inquired Miss Clifton, without noticing the old woman's alarm.

"No, chile, sure not. Who should ribe at dis onlikely hour ob de mornin'? Ledst it war de doctor. Has you sent for de doctor, honey? But, Lord, indeed, chile, you better lay down ag'in. Don't keep on standin' dere holdin' up your hair, weak as you looks, an' I'll run and see!"

"Aunt Darky, I am not ill. I have had a bad night's rest, that's all. Go, and—"

"A bad night's res', and like enough, honey! I had a *berry* bad night's res' de night afore me an' Old Nick took up 'long o' each oder! 'Deed, chile, I was sort o' scared, an' sorter happy 'cause I *was* scared. An', 'deed, chile, 'tween so many contrydictions, I couldn onderstan' myself, and kept awake all night. Lord, honey, it's nat'ral! We's all alike, 'cept 'tis de collor; an' dat' only outside show, skin deep. But bless you, honey, that wa'n't nothin' to the night resses I'se lost since dat, with long o' cryin' babies, an' teethin' babies, an' sick chillun, an' ole man Nick comin' home drunk ebery time ole marse give him any holiday money to spen' on hisself. Now, praise be de Lor', de chillun's all raised, an' married, an' settle off, an' I'm a free 'oman! An' I tell my gals how I ain' gwine be bother long o' *der* chillun, now in my ole days!"

"Aunt Darky," said Miss Clifton, feeling no way flattered by the parallel, "go and get my bath ready, and have a cup of strong coffee brought the instant I leave it."

"Yes, honey; and hadn't de baff's water better have de air tuk off o' it, as you'se not so strong dis mornin'?"

"Yes, yes; what makes you trouble me by questions? You ought to know what is proper to be done."

"An' so I allus does know, honey; ony when I does my mos' properess, you does'n alluz see it into dat light, an' you fines faurt 'long o' me," said the old body, as she left the room.

When Miss Clifton had left her warm bath, and had par-

taken of the rich strong coffee—strong as the essence of coffee, and made rich and thick by being half cream and sugar, and brought to her in a tiny porcelain cup—she felt sufficiently refreshed to be able, with the assistance of her woman, to make her morning toilet.

When she had finished dressing, it was still very early, and two hours remained before breakfast; but she left her room, and met her father, who was an early riser, in the upper hall.

He came forward and kissed her; then held both her hands, and looked in her face, exclaiming, "What, pale, my child? Oh, tut! tut! tut! That's *all* wrong! All wrong!"

"Father, has he come yet?"

"No, no; it's quite early yet. He'll be here anon. You should not have risen these two hours."

"Father, I could not sleep. I could not even lie in bed."

"Oh, pooh! pooh! All folly! all nonsense! Go back and rest."

"Father, I cannot! My words to him were so wrong, so bitter, so insulting! I feel them to have been such, and I can never rest until I have told him so," said Carolyn, dropping her head upon the only bosom to which her haughty heart could bear to confide its sorrow and its repentance.

"Well, so you were wrong, very wrong. It will teach you a lesson that will benefit you for the future, and for the present it will blow over. There, there, if you can't be still, go and amuse yourself by making me a nice mint-julep. I want it before I go out in the fields; the morning air on my empty stomach isn't good for me."

He then kissed Carolyn and let her go. As she left him, he saw to his surprise Frank Fairfax emerge from his chamber, with a portmanteau in his hand. Frank immediately set it down, and, advancing, said, "Ah, sir! I was just about to seek you, to let you know that, to my infinite regret, I must leave you to-day."

"To-day? You astound me! What is up now? You mustn't go; you shan't!"

"Sir, I have received an order to join my regiment without delay."

"Oh-h, that's bad! That's bad! Devil fly away with military life! That's what was always hiking away Archer

at the very time I wanted him most. But no frantic hurry! You needn't go to-day. You *mustn't*. Why, this is the wedding-day, you rascal!"

"I know it, sir. But, to my everlasting regret, I must forego the pleasure of being present upon that occasion. My order is a peremptory one, to join my regiment instantly."

"Well, well! To-morrow'll do! To-morrow'll do! *One* day cannot make so much difference."

"My dear sir, I surely need not tell you that soldiers should be 'minute men' in their obedience. Besides, if I do not seize the opportunity of meeting the Staunton stage as it passes through L—— to-night, I shall have to wait three days for the next stage. So, you see—"

"Yes, yes; I see! I am always called upon to see something I don't want to see. Ah! here comes the mint-julep! Did Miss Carolyn mix it?"

This was addressed to the coloured boy who brought a pint tumbler and a little waiter.

"Yez, zur," said the boy.

"Do you take julep in the morning, Frank? Try this. Another julep for me, Nace!"

"No, no, I thank you, sir. I never do. I wish you good morning till breakfast-time," said Frank, taking up his portmanteau, and going down stairs.

Frank put his little burden down in the lower hall, and went into the summer saloon, where he was sure, by the precedent of the last thirty days, of finding Zuleime at the window, doing her sampler-work. Yes, there she was, in her white muslin and coral, with her jet-black hair and damask cheeks! He went and sat down by her, after saying, "Good-morning," and sat for some minutes in perfect silence, watching Zuleime work the word Habt, in crimson silk. At length, "Whom do *you* love best in the world, Zuleime?" he asked.

"How can you ask? Whom does *everybody* love best?—'her nain sell,' as the Welchman says, of course!" exclaimed the merry maiden.

"Humph! Well, whom do you love the *next* best to yourself?"

"Why, let me see," said the girl, pausing thoughtfully, with her needle poised in her hand. "I think that, next to myself, I love—Zuleime Clifton best of all the world."

"I thought so! And I can lay my hand upon my heart, and say that you don't love Zuleime Clifton a whit better than I do!—no, nor half so well! I'll throw down my gage on that, and fight it out to extremity. Come! What have you to say to that?" asked the young man, with all the earnestness in his face and manner that his light words wanted. "Say!—speak! What do you say to that?"

"Why, that you are as foolish as Zuleime herself, in loving such a little out-of-the-way baggage, that is neither woman nor child, nor good nor bad, nor anything else in particular."

"Well, at any rate, we both agree in loving and worshiping Zuleime, however we may differ in our opinion of her; *I*, for instance, thinking her a beautiful, joyous, delightful girl. So, it's settled, isn't it?"

"What is settled?"

"Oh, you know, you tease!"

"I know the weather is settled, if you mean *that*."

"Pooh!"

"I *don't* know that the naval trouble with Great Britain is settled, if you mean *that*."

"Pooh, pooh!"

"I know that the marriage-dower of thirty thousand dollars is settled upon Carolyn, if you mean that."

"Pooh, pooh, pooh!"

"Well, I shall not try to guess again, lest you should say, 'Pooh, pooh, pooh, *pooh!*' four times."

"Zuleime!" said the young man earnestly, "I think, without presumption, I may say that I know your disposition towards me. Zuleime, I wish that we should pass all our lives together, side by side! I would like to open my heart and bid you look into it and read for yourself. I hate to say, 'I love you;' though if you could look into my heart! Oh, that phrase, 'I love you,' Zuleime, is so fallen, is so prostituted, so degraded from its high meaning. 'I love you' so often means 'I need your wealth,' 'need your family influence,' 'I desire your delightful beauty!' O Zuleime, dearest girl! how, then, shall I express my true, sincere, earnest devotion to you?"

"You needn't. I know you like me, Frank," murmured Zuleime very low. And then she added lower still, "But I am nothing but a wild school-girl; and, seriously, I fear

it isn't right for me to listen to such words for years to come yet. And I fear father might not like it, only that he likes *you* so very well."

And Zuleime bent over her sampler diligently, commencing the next word, Hope, in azure silk.

"I know it, Zuleime! Dear, candid girl, I know it all—all the seeming error! But, Zuleime, I am going away to-day," she looked up in surprise, "and I may be gone for several years. When I come back, I shall certainly return a captain, if not probably a major, or possibly a colonel. Before I go, I wish to have a fair understanding with yourself and your father, so that I may go away with some feeling of security. I want you both to promise that when I return, you will give me your hand."

"You may speak to father, Frank. But I tell you frankly now what I wish you had heard before. It is this: that I have been promised to my grim cousin, Major Cabell, ever since I can remember anything. And till you came, I have always, whenever I have anticipated the future at all, looked forward to being his humdrum wife, and living in a grim three-storey red brick, in a row, and opposite another row of stiff, prison-like red brick houses, each one of which, taken singly, is more dreary than all the rest. I didn't like the prospect, Frank; but I thought it was my fate, and the best father could do for me, and so I thought of no other possibility but the grim red brick house in the city and Major Cabell. Besides, father is so good a father, and so fond and indulgent, that it seemed *too* wicked to think of disappointing his gentle wishes, that never take the form of commands. And so, Frank, although, whenever I would think of the grim brick house, with tall dark chambers, and the narrow, stony, distracting street before it, and Major Cabell, my heart would sink very heavy, and I would think, young as I was, that there was scarcely any hope for me at all, yet I would recollect my dear good father wished it, and I would pluck up my spirits and feel blithe as a bird again. It was all understood at the school where I am getting finished, as they call it; and father left word that Major Cabell should be admitted to visit me. So when I am there, he comes to visit me frequently, and takes me out riding, or driving, and to concerts. And the girls whisper together, and say that I am engaged—"

"Stop, stop! Pardon me, Zulcime! Pardon me, dear girl! But, I am giddy—indeed, I am ill! Have you yourself promised to marry him?"

"No, surely not; and that is the reason why I consider myself in some sort *free*, but of my duty to my good father. No, he has never even asked me. He considers my father's promise quite sufficient, and our marriage quite a matter of course; and so I used to consider it, too. These things are often done, Frank—these betrothals, I mean. Anyone might suppose the custom obsolete—having died in the dark ages. It is not. It prevails here to a considerable extent. It is done to keep family property together, or family interest closely cemented. And, Frank, he has never courted me yet. You see he considers me a child still; and so I am, compared to him, in years. And so I should be in all things a child, but that the shadow of that grim brick house is always falling on my heart."

"And yet, with all this, you are a very, very merry maiden!"

"Yes, so I am. I try to be. I keep a din up in my head to prevent me hearing what my heart wants to say. Goodness! I can do nothing for the poor thing, you know; and what's the use of stopping to listen to its cry?—*that* would only encourage it to complain the more. Don't look so sorry, Frank! It is not all effort—it could not be, you know. I'm naturally of a glad, elastic temper; and, but for this drawback, Heaven knows what I should be!—the wildest, maddest, most harem-scarem, most heels-over-head, skip-over-the-moon madcap that ever turned a quiet home topsyturvy, and drove a quiet family to distraction! The Bible says, 'God loveth whom He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son (and daughter) whom He receiveth.' Then, I think (I *do* think, sometimes, young and volatile as I am), I think that every one whom God redeems has *some* sorrow, and that that sorrow is always the precise one fitted to cure their besetting sin—as the proud are still kept down by poverty and oppression, the vain lose their charms, or the power of enhancing them, &c. &c., among all the erring whom God designs to set right. And I, who am naturally so wild and thoughtless, must be sobered and made thoughtful by the prospect of that prison before me."

"Zulcime, does this man love you?"

"Frank, if I say he does not *hate* me, it is the extent of all favourable things I can say about the state of his mind towards me. No, he does not love me. It is entirely a betrothal of convenience. Sometimes I look forward to my future life in that great unknown city, which I should dislike under any circumstances, and especially to pass my whole life in with one I do not like, and who does not like me, and I *wonder* how I shall contrive to exist—*I*, who love to be in the country, on this dear old homestead, with my fond old father and my tender old nurse, and the coloured folks who love me so well, and where I have so many occupations; and, o' my soul and body! I think how *shall* I ever put life through in that packed-up city. Sometimes I think—for I *must* have something to occupy my whole soul with—that I will be very gay and worldly, and dress, and visit, and give balls, and go to balls and theatres; but then, again, I reflect that it would be wicked to spend all one's time and attention upon such things. And then I think I shall try to grow serious enough to join a Church, and that I will be a leading member, and a Sunday-school teacher, and a patroness of the Bible Society and of the Missionary Society, and a getter-up of new kinds of benevolent associations and Dorcas circles, and be a committee-woman, and a distributor of tracts, and a collector of subscriptions, and so on. One *must* do something to fill up the long, long days; one *must* live somehow, and, upon the whole, I thought this latter plan might do, as it would occupy me entirely, and is not so wicked as the other."

"Ah, I don't know that, Zuleime! But, my dearest girl, erase all these troubled thoughts about the future, unnatural to your age, and unwholesome to yourself. This whole cloud must be swept away like a cobweb. He doesn't love you—you don't love him. He has never asked you to marry him—you have never promised to do so. It is a mere betrothal of convenience, made by the parents of both for the purpose of keeping family property together, and cementing family interests. Oh, it is all wrong! And there is nothing in it! I will speak to your father. I will enter the lists with this Major Cabell, as a competitor for your hand. In all worldly circumstances, which are ever of the greatest value in a Clifton's estimation—in family, wealth, and social position—I am his peer. Besides, I wear my lady's favour, which he

does not! I will go to your father now and tell him as much; shall I, Zuleime?"

The young lady was busy threading her needle with golden yellow silk, and did not answer. He repeated the question.

"Yes," murmured Zuleime, beginning to embroider the last word of the trio, *faith*, in sunbeam silk. No time was to be lost. He raised her hand to his lips, and darted out upon the lawn to meet old Mr. Clifton, whom he saw approaching the house.

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Mr. Fairfax rather excitedly, "I have something of the utmost importance to say to you! Will you take a turn with me?"

"My dear sir!" repeated the old gentleman, smiling, "breakfast is ready. Let's go on to the house."

"But, my *dear* sir, my business is urgent!"

"My *very* dear sir, the coffee is getting cold!" said the old man, laughing at Frank's excitement.

"Mr. Clifton," said the young man gravely and sadly, "immediately after breakfast I must leave here. This, then, is the only opportunity I have or shall have of communicating to you what is on my heart to say, and it really *is* on my *heart*."

"Say on, then, my dear boy—say on!" exclaimed the benevolent old gentleman. But Frank, now that he had got leave to speak, was struck dumb. He thought it was perfectly easy and simple to ask for Zuleime; but now the request, like Macbeth's amen, stuck in his throat. "Come," said the old gentlemen, running his fat arm through Frank's slender one, "give me the support of your arm—for I am not so young and active as you are—and let us take a little walk up the path towards Hardbargain. Perhaps we may meet Archer, and bring him back with us to breakfast. He is not at the *house*, is he?"

"No, sir," said Frank, glad to recover the use of his tongue.

"We expect him here to breakfast. We shall probably meet him. Come! Well, now, what is it?" he asked, as they turned their backs on the house.

Frank had plucked up his courage, and now spoke to the purpose.

"Mr. Clifton, as I am going away immediately after breakfast, and as I am to be absent for an indefinite length

of time, I wish before I leave to tell you that which lies upon my heart." Here he paused a little time to collect his thoughts and fine words, while the old gentleman attended with an encouraging expression of countenance. Frank resumed, "Mr. Clifton, I love your daughter Zuleime, and I have come to beg your sanction to our engagement!" As the old man only said, "Woew-w-w!" Frank continued, "You know my rank in the army, and my prospect of promotion. You are acquainted with my family, and are aware of their interest and influence in the country. Allow me farther to add that my own private fortune amounts to fifty thousand dollars; and I will settle thirty thousand on my bride. Besides which—"

"Stay, stay, my *dear* fellow, stay!" interrupted the old man, with a troubled look. "This is all nonsense, now! Zuleime is a child; and you have not known her more than six weeks. Love Zuleime! Pooh, pooh! You young men are so flighty and fickle in your fancies! You get frantic about every new face you see, and think yourselves in love! Pooh, pooh! Now, Frank, my boy, come! let's hear no more of it! It's all nonsense! You young officers are always in love, or fancying yourselves so! I dare say you have been in love with all the daughters of all your commanders, and, Heaven forefend! a little platonically smitten with all their wives, too! Come, I know you! Nonsense. Let's hear no more of it."

"Mr. Clifton, I am no trifler in matters of the affections. I never *have* been—I never *shall* be, I hope; and when I tell you, upon my sacred honour, that never in my life have I 'flirted,' as it is called, with a woman—that never in my life have I either loved or addressed the language of love to a woman except Zuleime—you will believe me!"

"*Oh-h!*" exclaimed the old gentleman, with an exceedingly bored look. "It's all folly, all nonsense, I tell you. A sudden fancy; nothing more. Let's drop the subject."

"Mr. Clifton," said the young man gravely and sorrowfully, for he saw that the old gentleman rather evaded than denied or accepted his suit, "I have never, in my whole life, been addicted to taking sudden and evanescent fancies, as you might judge from what I told you. And when I tell you that I love your daughter Zuleime, I mean that I

love her sincerely and earnestly, with my whole heart and soul, and that I shall love her to the last hour of my life."

"Bah, bah! It's all *tomfoolery*, I tell you! You get yourself shut up in a country-house with a pretty girl, and *of course* you fall in love with her. To be sure. What else could you do? It's expected of you. You disappoint us if you didn't. But it is such love as will not outlast your journey to your regiment."

"It will outlast my life. I know it will—I feel it will!" said Frank earnestly, vehemently.

"Tah, tah! you'll fall desperately in love with the first pretty squaw of the friendly tribes who shall come to bring moccasins to your frontier fort."

"O God!" groaned the young man bitterly, dropping his face into his hands. "There is no way of making a serious impression upon you, and I am going away in two hours!" His tone and manner so affected the really impressible and benevolent old gentleman that he half embraced him with his fat arm, saying—

"Now, don't, Frank! *Do* be a good boy! Don't! Do! It's all folly now; *indeed* it is. Do! Don't! Now, consider how many pretty girls there are in the world! *Don't*, Frank! A great deal prettier than my girl. Never fret about her. *Do*, Frank. Besides, she's so young—a mere school-girl. Only fifteen last Monday. Pooh, pooh! Not to be thought of, you know. Far too young."

"Sir, I can wait. I only wish your sanction to our engagement. I can wait three or four years, if necessary, or any length of time at all, if I may hope to get her at last!"

"She is too *young*, I tell you, Frank. Too young to know her own mind. Only fifteen. Ridiculous!"

"But, sir, I have heard of gentlemen older and more settled than myself who have actually *married* girls of fifteen. *I* only ask an engagement!"

"You mean *me*, you dog! I know you do! I see you do! But, Frank, seriously and solemnly, I wouldn't do so again! And for the very reason that *I* committed that egregious folly, that bitter wrong against a young girl, I will not suffer anyone else to do the same wrong to my child, if I can help it."

"No, Mr. Clifton, pardon me, but are *you* not about to

commit a more grievous wrong to your own lovely, gentle child? Have you not—pardon me! pardon me!—but *have* you not promised her hand where she cannot give her heart?"

"No! Heaven forbid! I promised her to Charley Cabell. She used to like him very well. I did the best I could for her happiness. I have secured it, unless—unless—O my God, Frank!" suddenly exclaimed the old man, in his turn, extremely agitated, and wiping the perspiration from his brow, "I *hope*, I *trust in God* you haven't entrapped her affections! Frank! Frank! She *is* engaged to Major Cabell! I didn't tell you so when you first asked me for her, because—because—for many reasons"— (wiping the streaming perspiration from his brow)—"it is, it is disagreeable to remember and to talk about it. But—but she *is* engaged to Major Cabell; and—and for many reasons, family reasons, it is necessary that the engagement should be fulfilled; unless—unless some inevitable, *insurmountable obstacle* was to arise and prevent it. Frank! Frank! I am in a great strait—a dire, doleful strait; but sooner than make my girl unhappy, or stand in the way of her perfect happiness, I would, I would *die in a jail!*—where I may die, where I may die!" Nothing could exceed the force of the emotion that agitated the old man, shaking his huge form, and choking up his utterance.

Mr. Fairfax looked at him with mingled astonishment, wonder, and compassion.

"Boy, boy, you *haven't* entrapped my dear child's heart?" again inquired the old gentleman, trembling with excess of feeling.

"*Entrapped* is not exactly the word, sir," said Frank proudly and mournfully. "I learned to love her, and I won her love without designing to do either."

"Lost! lost!" cried Mr. Clifton, dropping his head upon his bosom. He walked on in silence so desponding that Fairfax could not bring himself to intrude upon it. They went on until they suddenly met *Major Cabell himself* coming down the hill, apparently from Hardbargain.

The major was walking slowly, with his head down, and twirling around his finger a topaz necklace. As soon as he perceived Messrs. Clifton and Fairfax, his forehead flushed, and he hastily crammed the necklace into his vest-pocket.

Frank thought the whole thing strange; but stranger still was the conduct, the metamorphosis, the transfiguration of Mr. Clifton, who, upon observing the major, instantly put a violent constraint upon himself, and became the broad-faced, rosy, smiling, blue-eyed, *débonnair* old gentleman, so lavish in the display of his fine teeth, and hearty, cordial words and smiles. Frank was provoked that their conversation was so completely arrested.

"Ah, good morning," said Mr. Clifton, addressing the major. "Been to Hardbargain this morning, so early? How are all the folks up there? See Archer? Why didn't he walk with you? Eh? Expected him."

"I have not been to Hardbargain, sir," replied the major rather morosely.

"Been out taking a morning stroll, then, eh? Fine appetite for breakfast, no doubt; and it is waiting for us, too. Come, Frank, let's turn about."

They did so. Frank now noticed, for the first time, that the manner of the old gentleman was conciliating, while that of the major was surly.

They soon reached the house and the breakfast-room, where the ladies were awaiting their arrival.

As they entered, the countenance of Carolyn Clifton was flushed and eager; but when they had all got in, and were seated at the table, the colour died out of her face, leaving her pale as marble. She merely trifled with her breakfast, pretending to eat, but no morsel passed her lips. When breakfast was over, and the company dispersed about the room, Carolyn almost reeled past her father in going out, and muttered, with pale lips, "Father! Not come yet?"

"Never mind, never mind, my dear! I will ride up to Hardbargain and fetch him."

"Not for the universe, father, if he never comes!" replied the determined girl, plucking up her spirit, and sweeping proudly past and going into the piazza, where she sat, by-the-bye, with her eyes strained up the mountain-path by which he ought to come.

Frank got no opportunity of speaking alone with Zuleime. Old Mr. Clifton met him, however, when he came in from looking after his horse, and said, kindly patting him on the shoulder, "Indeed, my dear boy, I don't see the least necessity for your leaving us until after dinner. The stage-

coach doesn't pass through L—— till eight o'clock at night, and five or six hours is ample time in which to reach there."

"Yes, sir, I grant it; but I have to go this morning to Hardbargain to take leave of Mrs. Clifton, and of my friend Archer, if, indeed, the latter is not ordered on the same duty as myself, which, upon Miss Clifton's account, I am inclined to fear."

"Oh, are you going to ride to Hardbargain? Then perhaps you will be pleased to learn that Zuleime is going there this morning also, to assist Mrs. Clifton in putting the last finishing touches to her dress for this evening. And you can escort her," said Georgia, smoothly gliding between them, and laying her head and hand with child-like freedom and affection upon the old man's shoulder.

"Oh, I shall be very happy!" said Frank, "*really* happy—nay, *overjoyed*, *intoxicated*—with the prospect of an uninterrupted farewell *tête-à-tête* with Zuleime."

Old Mr. Clifton looked rather disappointed, but he was not of a very combative disposition—especially had he no inclination to contradict Georgia. Besides, he at once reflected that there was really no danger. They couldn't be married in the neighbourhood, because they could get no licence, and no clergyman dare marry them without one. And it was not probable, or even possible, that Frank would elope with his daughter on the very eve of joining his regiment for a distant and dangerous service. In truth, he felt it was folly to cherish a misgiving. And yet he *had* misgivings, nor could he banish them; the utmost extent of his self-control was, not to *act* upon them—not to forbid their riding together. While Zuleime was putting on her hat and riding-habit, Frank got the ear of the old gentleman once more, and for the last time. The old man had sunk into his broad-bottomed flag-chair in the hall, with his thick gold-headed stick between his knees, and his two hands and his chin resting upon it, when Frank stood before him with folded arms and head dropped upon his breast, and said, "Mr. Clifton, once more, and for the last time, I ask you, and I implore you to answer me candidly. Is there any possibility that, under any change of circumstances, at any future time, I may hope for your consent to my union with Zuleime?"

The earnestness, deepening almost into solemnity, of the

young man's manner and words impressed Mr. Clifton very deeply; but he replied, "Mr. Fairfax, it is best to speak the plain, harsh, cutting truth, though that truth is the axe laid to the root of all your hopes of Zuleime. No! Yet I regret this, Frank! You do not know how much. But you must forget her. I hope you will *soon* do so. I know you *must!*"

Frank shook his head in despairing negation. And farther colloquy was arrested by the coming down of Zuleime equipped for her ride.

"Come here, my daughter. Now, you must be *sure* to be back by dinner-time, do you hear?"

"Certainly, sir."

"*Promise* me."

"Of course I do."

"Upon your *honour!*" said the old man seriously.

"Upon my honour, sir, I will return by dinner-time. But what makes you so emphatic about it, dear father?"

"A notion of mine, my child; but I have your promise."

"Of course you have, sir!" said Zuleime, drawing on her gloves.

Mr. Fairfax was taking leave of Mrs. Clifton. Presently he turned to bid adieu to Mr. Clifton.

The old gentleman shook his hand warmly, wishing him all the success he desired, and affecting to laugh and jest while he exacted a like promise from Fairfax—namely, that he should take his girl to Hardbargain, and leave her there to return by dinner-time.

Frank gave his word very cheerfully. The young couple then mounted and rode away. The old man watched them from the piazza in sorrowful love, murmuring—

"God bless them! I wish they *could* be married. Poor things! If they *do* love each other so much, or if they *think* they do, which is quite as bad while it lasts, why, it is but kind to let them have this last little parting comfort of a ride together. And it was well, too," chuckled the old gentleman, "to tie them up with promises, so that they can't run away, which they might else be tempted to do in their parting-hour. But they will neither of them ever break their word, and I shall have her back safe by dinner-time; for it is utterly impossible for them to get married without a licence, and it is quite impracticable to get a licence this side of L——, or to ride to L—— between this and noon,

much less to ride thither and return here in time for dinner. Ah! I have them there! And yet I am sorry for them, too. Poor things!"

All this time Carolyn Clifton had sat like one dead, only with her eyes strained up the mountain bridle-path.

In the meantime Frank and Zuleime pursued their ride. As soon as they were out of sight and hearing of a band of field-labourers, employed in cutting grass, and had entered the shady mountain-path, Frank said, "Well, Zuleime, my dearest girl, I spoke to your father—"

"And his answer—I almost dread to hear it—yet I know what it was, too."

Frank nodded his head, and they rode on in silence for some minutes, broken at last by Frank, who suddenly exclaimed, "Zuleime, you bear this so well!"

"Frank, you know this is no new thing to me; I have known it, and been prepared for it all along!" replied the girl, with a look of resignation.

"O Zuleime! is there no way to prevent it?"

"None that I know of, Frank!"

"Zuleime, I was in every way his equal—why, when that is the case, and when I was supported by your voice, too—*why* was I rejected?"

The maiden shook her head.

"Zuleime, when is this hideous marriage expected to come off, do you know?"

"Whenever Major Cabell chooses to demand my hand, I believe!"

"Really! Upon my word, he is a personage of tremendous importance! Whenever HE chooses to demand your hand! Zuleime, that is passing strange! This affair seems, then, to rest entirely with Major Cabell!'

"Yes, it does entirely."

"Bless his majesty! Zuleime, *what hold has that man on your father*?"

Zuleime shook her black ringlets mournfully, but did not reply.

"Do you know, my dear girl, that I am impressed with the idea that your father does not at heart wish to give you to Major Cabell, but rather yields to a strange power the man holds over him?"

"At times I have thought so, too; but then my dear

father at other times really seems so set upon the marriage, that the thought has been driven out of my head again. I do not know what to think. But what I *do* know is, that I will never willingly do anything to give my dear father pain!"

"My dearest girl, do you know that I believe, from my soul, that your marriage with Major Cabell will give your father more pain than any other circumstance could!"

The young girl looked up in surprise.

"Zuleime, he told me to-day that, though he had promised you to Major Cabell, he would rather die than see you unhappy, or stand in the way of your *perfect* happiness!"

"My dear father! my dear, gentle father! my fond, old father!" exclaimed Zuleime, with the bright tears rolling on her damask cheeks, like dew on the red rose. "My kind, generous father! He shall never know that I am unhappy; and neither *shall* I be unhappy when pleasing him!"

"My dear, excellent girl, listen to me! You shall not be unhappy any way. Do you suppose, Zuleime, that I could ride by your side so cheerfully, if I thought you were going to marry that man, on whom your father no more wishes to bestow you than he wishes to send you to perdition? Listen, my darling girl! When your father told me what I have repeated to you, he went on to say that, for certain *family* reasons, it was incumbent on him to fulfil his promise, and to bestow your hand upon Major Cabell, *unless some insurmountable obstacle should interpose to arrest the union!* Zuleime, a flood of light broke on me then; and I felt and knew that the old man would yield his darling daughter to the mysterious power exercised over him by Major Cabell, rather than bestow her with esteem and affection. Zuleime, without vanity, I think that he loves me better, and would prefer me for a son-in-law, if he were free to choose. I think, indeed I do, that he would hail with secret joy 'an insurmountable obstacle' which would prevent the marriage, and not implicate him in any manner. I think that was what he meant when he said what he did. Still, I am convinced that the words slipped from him unintentionally. I am certain he did not mean to give me the hint, which, nevertheless, I take; for he is a man of strict honour, I know, and would never tamper with the *spirit* of a promise any more than he would break the *words!*"

"Oh, no, he never would, indeed!"

"And again, my dearest girl, when I asked him, just before we came away, whether, at any future time, under any possible contingency, I might hope to obtain his consent to our union, he assured me that I might not, and earnestly intreated me to forget you. That further convinced me that he had no design in giving me the hint upon which I am about to act. Do you hear me, dearest Zuleime?"

Zuleime did not, or at least did not appear to.

"Zuleime, my darling, my love," said Frank, dismounting in the path, and lifting her from her saddle, "I am about to raise 'an insurmountable obstacle' to your marriage with the major!"

Zuleime turned deadly pale with surprise and terror, and glanced wildly around, while she fell upon his arm, and seemed about to faint.

"Why, Zuleime! Come, come! What is the matter? Don't be afraid! What, afraid of *me*, of *Frank*, your playmate? Why, look up in my face and see! Come, lift up your head! I want to talk to you! There, there! Why, what are you afraid of? I will take *no* step without your consent, sweet Zuleime!"

The infinite tenderness of his words, tones, and manner re-assured the frightened girl, and she raised her face, now suffused with blushes. He supported her with his arm around her waist, while he pointed down into a narrow glen to the right, and said, "There! Look there, Zuleime! Do you see that little stone house, there in the bottom of the glen, there by the spring, but so much like the rocks near it, and so deep in the shade, as hardly to be distinguishable? Do you see it?"

"Yes," breathed the maiden very low.

"Do you know who lives there?"

"No."

"A good old man! A saintly old man! A poor Baptist missionary preacher, who lives in that hut quite alone, and *preaches* there every Sunday to an humble congregation, composed of poor mountaineers and negroes. He has devoted his life to labour among the mountain-people, and has done wonders in reforming them! Is it possible that *you*, living in the neighbourhood, knew nothing of him?"

"Oh, yes! I have heard a great deal about Mr. Saunders, only I did not know where exactly his hut was. There are so

many of them, you know!" said the girl, somewhat recovered and much interested.

"My dearest Zuleime, we will go down to that hut! I see by the smoke that so gracefully curls that the old man is at home. We will tell him the whole story, as far as we know it, and get him to raise that required insurmountable obstacle!"

"O Frank!" exclaimed Zuleime, shocked, delighted, terrified, overjoyed.

"But, my dearest Zuleime! my dearest love! I have recorded an oath in heaven to save you from that marriage with Cabell; and I will never leave you until you are my wife. If you refuse now, I will throw up my commission in the army, and live there in that hut with the old parson until you *do* consent!"

"But, my father, Frank! My dear father!"

"Dearest girl, he will be glad!" Here Frank went over the whole story again, and added, "And, Zuleime, have you no love, no pity left from your father to bestow upon the poor soldier who loves you so, and who is going out to the Indian frontier, where he may lose his scalp, or be burned alive, or eaten raw within a month by the red-skins? Will you refuse his last prayer?" &c. &c. Over and over again, fervently, earnestly, imploringly, despairingly, he repeated the argument and the prayer, while he held the maiden "half willing, half afraid." "She who hesitates is lost," it is said.

Zuleime hesitated a long time, and, consequently, was lost to all eternity. What could she oppose, indeed, to what seemed so right and reasonable? With a deep sigh, she yielded at last. There was no path that way down into the glen, and the descent was deep and precipitous, and over grown with stunted cedar, pine, and thorn bushes. So Romeo and Juliet began to clamber down, by footholds of jagged rocks, and fistholds of thorn-bushes, to the great risk of wounded hands and torn pants and petticoats. And so it was in rather a disordered state of attire, as well as in an excited state of mind, that they at last arrived before the door of Father Lawrence's cell and rapped. While they waited for the old man to appear, Frank, very much to the surprise of Zuleime, drew from his vest-pocket a licence, a regular *bona fide* licence, signed by the clerk of R—— County, and

sealed with the county seal. Resting his foot upon the door-step, he took off his hat, turned it down on his knee, laid the licence upon its top, and, drawing from his other pocket a travelling pen and ink case, proceeded to write the names of Francis Rutland Fairfax and Zuleime Dovilliers Clifton in the blank spaces.

"You look surprised, my dearest girl," said he, as he returned the pen and ink case to his pocket. "You wonder how I came by this licence. I will tell you. I have it by a stroke of the rarest good fortune. You know, being groomsman, I was intrusted with the duty of riding to L——, and procuring the marriage-licence for Archer and your sister. Well! when I arrived at the clerk's office, by the strangest caprice of memory, I entirely forgot Miss Clifton's middle name; so I got the clerk to give me one licence filled out with the names of Carolyn Clifton and Archer Clifton; and then, knowing how extremely punctilious you all are here in this county, I procured another licence regularly signed and sealed, but leaving blank spaces for the proper names of the parties. There, darling! that is the manner in which I came by it. Now, this blank one I fill up with our names, which I really think look quite as pretty as the others would! As for Clifton and your sister, if they want a licence, they will have to put up with the first, which I will hand to Archer as soon as we get to Hardbargain. Bless my soul! what has become of that old man?" he exclaimed, rapping loudly, then trying the door and pushing it open. The house was empty. Frank looked dismally disappointed, but Zuleime plucked him by the sleeve, and whispered hurriedly, "Here he comes, behind you!"

And he turned to see the old preacher coming from the spring, bending under the light weight of a small pail of water. Frank immediately went to him, greeted him respectfully, and took from his hand the pail, and, carrying it, walked by his side till they reached the house. Lieutenant Fairfax then introduced himself by name and station, and presented Miss Zuleime Clifton. The old man bowed and offered his hand with a courtly grace, in strange contrast to his rude garb and rough habitation. He invited them to come in and sit down; and when they had entered, and Zuleime was seated, Frank took the old man aside, communicated the object of their call, and produced his licence.

The old man glanced from the earnest countenance of Frank to the blushing, downcast face of Zuleime, shook his bald head, and looked very grave.

Frank drew him off to the farthest corner of the little hut, made him sit down on the foot of his bed, seated himself by his side, and, in a fervid, earnest, eloquent manner, told him their little story.

Many times the old man shook his thin, grey locks. They were not good things, these secret marriages; they never prospered. Marriage should be open as day, with the blessing of God, with the blessing of parents, with the sympathy of friends, with the good wishes of acquaintances, to hallow and prosper the union.

Oh! said Frank; but this was an extraordinary occasion. The father was really at heart not opposed to this marriage, but circumstances compelled him to withhold his open consent—he himself (Frank) was about to depart on a long journey, and merely wished to secure his bride against a forced marriage of convenience during his absence. In short, Frank recommenced the argument, and told it all over from beginning to end.

Still the old man shook his bald head and demurred.

Frank began the story over again, recited the whole of it, with many additions and improvements.

To no purpose; the old man was obdurate. Frank then half angrily arose and said, "Come, Zuleime. We must go on to the frontier together, and find somebody to marry us on the route, and let Mr. Saunders here be responsible for all trouble that may ensue, since, with the licence before him, he refuses to unite us." At this, Zuleime burst into tears, and wept heartily.

The old preacher dropped his head upon his breast in troubled thought for some moments, and, whether the arguments of Frank had, after all, produced some effect, or whether he feared to encounter the responsibility of sending this wild young couple on their way unmarried, or whether he was moved to pity by the tears of Zuleime, or whether, as is more probable, *all* these considerations actuated him, I know not; but he slowly rose to his feet, uncovered his head, and lifted up his eyes in silent prayer a while, then bade the young pair stand up, for that he would marry them.

Frank clasped the hand of Zuleime, and led her forward;

and in less than fifteen minutes more, by the magic of a few words, the youth and maiden were man and wife. And while Mrs. Fairfax, with trembling white fingers, was tying her hat, Mr. Fairfax would have emptied the whole contents of his purse in the minister's hands; but though that money might have supplied the poor old preacher with many necessaries for which he really suffered, and made him very comfortable for a long time, yet he turned away his head, and put it away from him, saying, "No, young man, I cannot take your gold. I may have erred in what I have done, but I did not do it for money."

"But you always take a fee, do you not?"

"From others I do—not from you; it would not be blessed."

The boyish brow of Frank clouded and darkened; but it cleared again instantly as he turned towards his bride.

They were about to bid the old minister adieu, when he took a hand of each, and, joining them again, held them in his own, while he said, "Children, if this thoughtless act bring you into much trouble in the long, weary years of trial and suffering that may result from it, reproach *me* for my share in the rash deed as much as you please; but"—he paused and looked solemnly from one to the other—"never, as you value love, and fidelity, and peace—never, as you value the favour of Heaven—never reproach each other with it. So may God forgive, and bless, and prosper you! Good-bye!"

The young bride and groom had bowed their heads during this benediction, and at its close responded with a silent, heartfelt amen. They then left the cabin.

If the minister of God grievously erred in performing this secret marriage-ceremony, he was soon called to account for it—the old man died that night.

As Mr. and Mrs. Fairfax left the cabin, they perceived Kate Kavanagh, on her little rough-coated mountain pony, coming straight down into the glen, her sure-footed little animal treading with perfect security the precipitous descent down which they had been obliged to clamber. Kate was looking very pale and care-worn, so that her ponderous abutting forehead, in its pallor, reminded Frank of a bare, bleached cliff; and, indeed, he thought that Kate's face looked more like that of an anxious politician, with the affairs of a nation on his shoulders, than of a grieved girl:

but this was the fault of her marked features. But little time or thought had Mr. Fairfax to bestow upon the mountain-girl; so, as soon as he caught sight of her, he turned in another direction, to avoid being recognised, saying, "By all that's fatal, my dearest love, we were near being detected! And, by all that's fortunate, we have escaped! Come this way; we will take a stroll down the glen and into the forest for a little while, until this girl is clear of the way."

"Oh, but it will delay us so much; I shall not have time to go to Hardbargain, and assist Aunt Clifton, and get back home to dinner, as I promised."

"*My dear*," said Frank reproachfully, "do you grudge me these last few hours of your society, when we are about to be separated so far and so long? Besides, you know, you are my own dear wife now. Will you refuse?"

"No, no, I cannot! But, oh, let me return to father—my dear, fond, confiding father—as soon as I promised! Let me keep the word of promise to his ear, if I have broken it to his hope!" cried Zuleime, bursting into a passion of tears.

Safe tears, and unobserved but by him who kissed them away; for already they had entered the thicket, and were veiled from the sight of Kate Kavanagh, who now dismounted before the door of the hut, and, taking from the horns of the saddle a basket and a bundle, entered the poor preacher's humble habitation. We will turn from the erring pair, and enter with her. None but God knew how much disinterested good the poor mountain-girl did in this world; even the minister, who loved and respected her, knew little beyond the good she did for him. He knew that she knit new stockings and darned old ones for him; that she took his scanty clothing every week, and mended, and washed, and ironed it for him; and that, when she brought it back, she would always bring him butter, cream, and cheese of her own making, and a fresh loaf of rising bread of her own baking, and often some little rural luxury besides, as a jar of honey or a piece of venison, and that she would stay and clean up his house before she left. He knew that she was his good spirit.

As Kate entered the room, the old man came and met and took the basket and the bundle from her hands and them down, and set a chair for her, and made her sit down

in it, while he said, "My dear child, my excellent child, you do too much for me! You hurt yourself, Catherine, and make me too deeply your debtor!"

Kate waved her hand in that quick, short way peculiar to herself, silently beseeching him to stop.

"But it is the truth, Catherine, my child. I shall never be able to repay you!"

"Oh, sir, you have reversed the case. It is *I* who am *your* debtor. If I were not particularly your debtor for all the education, mental, and moral, and religious, that I have ever received, up to the time of my coming to Hardbargain, still I should be generally your debtor, as youth is the general debtor of age, owing it all the service it can give." Then, to change the subject, the girl laid off her straw hat, drew off her sheep-skin home-made mittens, and arose and uncovered her basket, saying, "Instead of a loaf of rising bread, Mr. Saunders, I have brought you some fresh biscuits; I thought they might be an agreeable change. There is also a fresh print of butter, and a bottle of cream, and a beef's tongue, boiled—I thought the last would give you an appetite—I think you have not had a good appetite, lately?" And without more ado Catherine put the things away in the cupboard, setting the bottle of cream in a bowl of water, to keep cool, and wishing to herself that she had a piece of ice to put on the old man's print of butter. Next she unrolled the bundle, took the old man's nicely-washed and mended clothes, and put them neatly away in the chest of drawers. Then she set the empty basket aside, rolled up her sleeves, stooped down upon the hearth, and began to make the fire, saying, "You know I have come to dine with you to-day, Mr. Saunders."

"I know you have come to bring me many comforts, and to cook my dinner, and clean up my house, and make me very comfortable, you good girl, my dear little Brownie!"

Catherine moved about, in her quick and quiet way—filled and put on the kettle—for the old man would always have his cup of tea—and set the table, placing all the little rarities she had brought upon it. When all was ready, and they sat down, the old man found leisure to observe that Kate ate nothing, and looked pale and thoughtful.

"What is the matter, my dear Kate? You who are *always* serious are *now* positively sorrowful! What is it?"

Kate, who was truth itself whenever she spoke, chose for that reason to give no answer.

The old man looked more and more disturbed, and, laying down his knife and fork, said, "Nay, but Catherine, my dear child, there is something the matter! I do not wish to intrude on your confidence; but if you have any trouble that you think I may possibly be able to soothe, confide in me as if I were your own father, my child."

"Dear Mr. Saunders, don't trouble your good heart about my cloudy face. Sure and hasn't a poor girl the same right to her smoke that a wealthy young lady has to her vapours?" said Kate, smiling.

The old minister did not press his question, but resumed his knife and fork with a look of mortification that worried Catherine, so that she said—

"I will tell you, then, what troubles me. My dearest, best friend and patron, Captain Clifton, has bidden me good-bye, and departed for the frontier. That is bad—oh, yes! very bad. But that is not the worst. He has gone away very unhappy. I might as well tell you what everybody will soon know: his marriage is broken off! He has gone away in anger with his promised bride. He has gone away so wretched! Mr. Saunders, when I saw him last night looking so pale, and stern, and proud, and knew the haughtiness and the anguish of his heart, I thought I could have died to have restored peace and joy between him and her he loved so strongly."

"Merciful Heaven! those Cliftons! This is another instance of their fatal subjection to passion! Do you know, my dear child, what caused this quarrel?"

"I know nothing but this—the marriage is broken off for the present. I do not know wherefore."

"Some jealous suspicion of one party or the other! Those Cliftons all have Spanish blood in them, and the Spanish character is uppermost in their nature. They are all haughty, reserved, jealous, suspicious."

"Ah, but they are full of courage, magnanimity, and benevolence," said Catherine.

"Archer Clifton is of a very jealous and suspicious nature—was his betrothed inclined to coquetry?"

"Oh, I do not know, sir; but the misunderstanding did not originate in any charge against Miss Clifton. It was

something of which Miss Clifton accused *him*, but of what I do not know; he did not say. My dear Mr. Saunders, I told you what troubled me, to satisfy your kind heart, and allay your benevolent anxiety on my account; and now please forgive me for beseeching you not to question me farther upon the subject. They—the parties, I mean—are far removed above my sphere of thought and action; and the investigation of their motives of action by me seems to involve a certain indelicacy—I fear, even impertinence of interference," said Catherine gently.

"Yet, far above your sphere of thought and action as you say they are, they are not—at least *one* of them is not—above your sphere of sympathy and emotion. *His* sorrow affects *you* with sorrow!"

The blood rushed to Kate's brow, and she remained silent.

The old man and the maiden soon after arose from the table. She washed up the dishes, tidied up the house, and collected the poor preacher's soiled and broken clothes, and tied them in a bundle to take away with her to wash and mend. Then she tied on her hat, and took leave of him; the old man calling her back, again and again, with vague, prophetic meaning, to repeat over and over, "God bless you, my child! God bless you!" It was his dying benediction.

A poor mountaineer that called early the next morning, to get the poor minister to the poor to come and bury his wife, found the old man dead.

CHAPTER IX.

WOMAN'S PRIDE.

ALL the forenoon, Carolyn Clifton sat in the same place and in the same attitude in which we left her, affecting to read, but really watching the mountain-path with heart-sickening anxiety. Every distant sound of a horse's hoofs that struck upon her ear sent an electric shock to her heart, causing her to start violently, tremble, and turn deadly sick and faint, with accelerated hope and fear, until its nearer approach revealed some neighbour going on his way, or some negro coming from the mill or the village, to her despairing

sight. Even the sound of carriage-wheels, as they occasionally rolled by, made her heart pause in its pulsations until it passed, and proved to be some family going on a visit or a shopping errand; for still she hoped that, if he did not come down the mountain-path on horseback, he might come round the road with his mother in her carriage. He came not. And, oh, the wedding-day was almost over! No one saw the strife of hope and fear, like the struggle of life and death, going on silently in her bosom. Mrs. Georgia Clifton spent the whole forenoon in her own apartment, professing to be engaged with many elegant preparations for the evening, but really full of triumph for the success of her wicked scheming, and anxiety and wonder for the events of the evening, and dark regret also for the absence of him who, if lost to Carolyn for ever, was lost to herself for a time at least. With all these passions and emotions striving in her bosom, she dared not show herself, lest her conscious heart and conscious face should betray her—for Georgia was yet young in wickedness.

The Misses Cabell were in their own chamber, putting a few finishing touches to their dresses for the evening; for they, with Zuleime, were to be the bridesmaids.

Zuleime herself had not yet returned, although it was near noon.

Old Mr. Clifton had been out, as was his daily habit of a forenoon, riding around his plantation.

He came in to-day a little earlier than usual; and finding his daughter exactly where he left her, but looking still more pale, haggard, and anxious than in the morning, he sat down by her side, put his arm tenderly around her waist, and gazed lovingly into her whitened and sharpened countenance, before he said interrogatively, "Not come yet, Carolyn?"

"No, sir!" answered the young lady, rising and putting off her father's caressing arm, and her own humiliating despondency, with a proud and queenly air.

"Well!" said the old man, with sudden energy, "I WILL certainly now ride up to Hardbargain and know the reason. Dandy, my horse, there! Bring him back! I've not done with him!"

"Father!" said Carolyn, seizing his hand, and detaining him, while she raised her head and looked and spoke in a

manner that reminded him more strongly than ever of her arrogant mother, "father, *no*, you will not go! No, no, father; if you have any love for *me*, any respect for the memory of my dead mother, do not subject her daughter and yours to such a mortification! No, father; if he *never* comes, never go after him!"

"You're a fool, girl!" cried the old man, breaking away from her, "a palpable fool! You were a fool for quarreling with him and sending him away, and now you are a greater fool for persisting in the quarrel. Mortification, indeed! Who'll be the most mortified this evening, I wonder, if he never comes? What the deuce are we to say to the people who will come here this evening to see you married? Tell me that!"

Before she could say another word, a large family carriage rolled down the road, and turned and entered the lawn.

Carolyn sank back in her seat, nearly swooning with the swift hope and fear that strove almost to agony as she gazed. It looked so much like Mrs. Clifton's carriage.

It was not, however. It contained the very earliest of the wedding guests, who, coming from a distance of thirty miles, had set out early enough to arrive in time to secure a whole afternoon's rest and refreshment before dressing for the evening. This was customary with those coming from afar. Old Mr. Clifton went down the steps to receive his guests.

Carolyn arose and withdrew into the house, fortunately before she had been recognised by the visitors; for it would have been shockingly out of all etiquette for a bride to be visible on her wedding-day before the wedding-hour.

When Mr. Clifton had ushered his guests into the drawing-room, he returned to the piazza to give some directions concerning the stabling of the horses; for where so many animals were expected to be provided for, it required some extra thought and care in their bestowal. While still giving his orders, he saw his younger daughter riding slowly up to the house. Pleased to see her return in safety, in spite of his evil forebodings of the morning, and thinking besides that she could give him some news of the laggard bridegroom, he hastened to meet her and lift her from the saddle, with a joyous, "Well, my darling! well, my damask rosebud! Back in time, according to promise, eh?"

But at the sight of her father, the girl's face flushed and

paled so swiftly, her bosom rose and fell so rapidly, her whole frame was so agitated, her manner so confused, that the old man was seized with alarm, and exclaimed hurriedly, "In the name of Heaven, my dearest child, what is the matter?"

But Zuleime, incapable of reply, looked as if she would sink into the ground.

Mr. Clifton's first definite thought was that some accident or catastrophe had befallen the bridegroom.

"Good Heaven, Zuleime, what has happened? Where is Archer Clifton? Speak—has he come to any harm?"

Much relieved that her father's suspicions had fallen out of the true track, yet still considerably shaken, Zuleime replied in a faltering voice that Captain Clifton had received orders, and had departed that morning with Lieutenant Fairfax for Winchester, where their regiment was quartered, and that Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain desired to see Mr. Clifton as soon as possible. Without another word—totally unsuspicious that Mrs. Fairfax stood before him—the old man threw himself on horseback, and rode furiously toward Hardbargain.

Mrs. Frank Fairfax, our runaway daughter and widowed bride, stole to her own little room to weep in secret a little over her fault, but a great deal over the absence of her husband, and the danger about to befall him.

Dinner was served without Mr. Clifton, Miss Clifton, Zuleime, and the Misses Cabell. Mrs. Georgia Clifton alone entertained the newly-arrived company. This did not occasion remark. Mr. Clifton was known to be absent; and it was customary, as I said before, for the bride and her attendants to be invisible.

In the meantime, Carolyn Clifton sat in her chamber, pride, love, regret, anger, hope, fear—all good and evil passions striving in her soul, or in turn holding the mastery over it. It was drawing near the hour when she should commence her bridal toilet, if indeed any bridal array was to be assumed that evening. Amidst all her keen anxiety, she dreaded lest some one should come in and tell her it was time to dress. What should her proud heart permit her to explain to such an one? She need not have feared interruption, however

The Misses Cabell, her bridesmaids, it is true, sat together

in their chamber, very impatiently awaiting a message from the bride—very impatiently, indeed; for after her ceremonious dressing, they had, of course, their own very elaborate toilet to make. But they would not enter her dressing-room unsummoned, or at least until they should receive from some member of the family a suggestion that it was now proper to do so. And no one thought or remembered to give them the hint.

Mrs. Georgia Clifton, self-convicted of being the originator of all the great trouble that had befallen, and the greater that was about to befall the house, kept herself as much as possible aloof; and Zuleime was as yet too deeply absorbed in the contemplation of her own recent bridehood, and the sorrow of her widowhood, to think of anything else.

Meanwhile old Mr. Clifton had ridden as for life up to Hardbargain, thrown himself from his horse, flung the bridle upon his neck and let him go loose, while he himself rushed up the stairs and into the hall, and, without the ceremony of a rap, burst into the quiet presence of Mrs. Clifton as she sat sewing in her shady parlour. She arose calmly to receive him; and the very quietness of the lady threw the excited old gentleman off his guard, and out of his politeness, and into a rage.

"Well, madam!" he exclaimed, throwing his hat down with a thump into a chair, and tramping up and down the floor. "*Here's* a pretty state of affairs!"

"Mr. Clifton, you are excited."

"Yes, madam, I AM excited!" interrupted the old man—"very *much* excited, madam—very much excited, *indeed!* Where is Archer Clifton? Tell me that!"

"Mr. Clifton, sit down and compose yourself!"

"Compose myself! Compose myself with a prospect of three hundred people pouring into my house to-night, each one of them agape to see a wedding, and to have to tell them there will be no wedding!"

"Mr. Clifton, you can't regret this circumstance more than I do!"

"I *don't* regret it at all, ma'am! I rejoice at it, ma'am! I congratulate myself and my daughter, ma'am! But I'll have satisfaction, ma'am! I'll have satisfaction, ma'am!" said the old man, wiping the perspiration from his red face.

"Satisfaction for what you *rejoice* at, Mr. Clifton?" in-

quired the lady, smiling at his unreasonable anger with herself.

"I'll—yes—I'll have satisfaction, ma'am!"

"From whom? From me? Do you intend to call me out as my son's representative? Do you wish to compel me to fight a duel, or to make an apology—which?" inquired the lady coolly.

"Dem it, mem, I'll—I'll have satisfaction!" exclaimed the old man, growing shorter and shorter in his syllables. "I'll—I'll write to the colonel of the regiment! I'll—I'll make the matter known to the major-general of the army! I'll—yes, dem-me!—I'll go to Washington and tell the President! I'll have that young rascal cashiered, and broken and dismissed from the service!"

"What! *all three!* Why, that is passing cruel! Quite as bad as being killed, and murdered, and mortally wounded!" said the lady, smiling at his insane vehemence.

"Dem it, mem! don't take my words up!" he exclaimed, stamping up and down the floor, and then breaking out into vituperative abuse of Archer Clifton, all addressed to Mrs. Clifton, who, though becoming very much agitated, now preserved a dignified silence.

"Mr. Clifton forgets that he is a man, and that he speaks to a woman!" said a stern but low-toned voice.

And the old gentleman turned to see Kate Kavanagh, "severe in youthful beauty," standing within the door; yes, in *beauty*, for her slight figure was drawn gracefully up—her bosom heaving, her fine head erect, her cheeks crimson, and her eyes intensely brilliant with the just indignation that moved her soul as she walked straight up to Mrs. Clifton, and said, "Dearest lady, allow me, *do* allow me to attend you to your own room, and be your substitute here in waiting upon Mr. Clifton."

"No, Kate—no, my dear girl. I have to talk rationally to the man as soon as he comes to his senses," replied the lady.

"*Who is* that girl?" inquired the old gentleman, not recognising Kate under the new aspect, or affecting not to do so. "Who *is* that girl, Mrs. Clifton?" he repeated, while the lady gazed fondly on her *protégée*.

"Miss Kavanagh—my son's ward, and my own adopted daughter," replied Mrs. Clifton, without withdrawing her fond gaze from the face of Kate, who was blushing under it.

"Miss Kavanagh—your son's ward, and your own adopted daughter! A promising relationship all round that is, up—on—my—word—it—is!" said Mr. Clifton very deliberately. "However," he added, "she has brought me to reflection, for which I thank her. And, Mrs. Clifton, I feel sorry and mortified that I have been betrayed into some violence of speech and manner; it is a family failing, you know. Pray pardon me."

"Mr. Clifton, please to sit down near me; my voice is not strong. It may be disquietude, but I find a difficulty in raising it, or in keeping up a running conversation."

"My dear sister, I am afraid your lungs grow weak! I am, indeed! I have noticed it before; I have said the same to Georgia and to Carolyn. Indeed, my dear sister Clifton, I wish you would take care of yourself. I was a brute to throw myself into a passion in your presence; I was, indeed! I see it has overcome you! Kate Kavanagh, my dear, you were perfectly right. I *did* forget myself; and you were a fine girl to recall me. Give me your hand, my dear."

Blushing deeply, as was her wont when praised, Kate gave her hand, saying half-apologetically, half-appealingly, "Mrs. Clifton is not strong, sir; she should not be agitated, especially so soon after her son has left her."

"I know she is not strong! My dear sister, I wish you'd be careful of yourself! I do, indeed! You're not strong."

"After fifty, we do not grow strong as we grow old," said the lady, pointing to a chair by her side, and indicating that he should take it. He did so; and then Mrs. Clifton turned to Kate, and said, "Now, Catherine, my dear, I wish you to go up into my chamber and amuse yourself with a book, while I have a confidential talk with Mr. Clifton."

Kate immediately arose, curtseyed, and left the room.

Mrs. Clifton turned to her brother-in-law, and said inquiringly, "You know the cause of this lovers' quarrel?"

"Of course I do, madam! Satan fly away with them both! I know all about it! It was about *her* up stairs!" he replied, indicating Kate Kavanagh by a crook of his thumb.

"Yes; it was about Kate. But it was very absurd!"

"Now, I don't know that, ma'am!"

"But it certainly *was*—ridiculous! Mr. Clifton, *she*, Catherine, knows nothing about it—does not even dream that she herself had the remotest connexion with the quarrel;

and I do hope and trust that she never may suspect it. What I wish to say to you is plainly this: that I know enough of human nature generally, and of young people particularly, and of Archer and Carolyn individually, to feel sure that this very absurd and extremely inconvenient quarrel and separation—"

"Yes; *very* extremely inconvenient, indeed!" emphatically interrupted the old man.

"Is only temporary—"

"Yes, ma'am; but that don't make it the less embarrassing, the less inconvenient!"

"I know it! Hear me out!

"What the deuce, ma'am, are we to do with the people who are coming to the wedding, even now?"

"I am about to tell you, if you will quietly listen to me," replied Mrs. Clifton.

"Well! well! Yes, ma'am! I beg your pardon; I am all attention."

"Carolyn, I am sure, already regrets her hasty violence of temper."

"Yes; that she does! It's easy to see that!"

"And Archer, who is slower to anger and slower to repentance—though deeper and stronger in both for being slow—Archer, in a very few days, will bitterly repent the step he has taken; more especially as being on his Western march, it will be impossible to retrace it. Under these circumstances, this is what you must say to the assembled company to-night. You must tell them that last night a peremptory order arrived for Captain Clifton to join his regiment immediately, and that the marriage is deferred for the present. Let the company then enjoy themselves as at a ball, and all will go off well, and without scandal. I will be present myself, as the representative of our side of the house. I sent for you, Mr. Clifton, to give you this advice, and to suggest this plan of action in meeting the embarrassing difficulties of this evening. I should not propose this if I were not sure that the marriage *is* only deferred—that, if the parties live, it will assuredly take place; I am *certain* it will, Mr. Clifton. I am willing to pledge my own truth and honour on it, and become responsible for it. The plan I propose to you for meeting the guests this evening is truest, wisest, and best; think of it."

"I do not think of it at all! I see its excellence at a glance! I spring to meet it! I embrace it—I hug it to my heart! O Mrs. Clifton, you are our deliverer! O Mrs. Clifton, you are the great grand-daughter of Oliver Cromwell, the general, the conqueror, the deliverer, the statesman, the politician, the diplomatist, the everything at an emergency! You'll see how gloriously I'll execute your orders. You'll make me Lieutenant-General when you are Lady Protector of the Commonwealth!" exclaimed the old man, starting up and clapping his hat upon his head, and joking like a boy, for very joy that his difficulty was smoothed. He shook hands with Mrs. Clifton, begging her not to be late, as he should want the encouragement of her presence in order to enable him to make his speech. Then he mounted his horse and rode rapidly away down the mountain-path to Clifton. When he arrived at home, he found the lawn already covered with carriages, horses, and servants, and the piazza, halls, and all the first-floor rooms thronged with company. He passed through them all, bowing right and left, and hastened to his daughter's room. Mr. Clifton had some doubts about getting his proud daughter to consent to the wise plan suggested by his sister-in-law. But he meant to carry his consent by a *coup de main;* so he pushed open her door, burst into her chamber, and threw himself, puffing, blowing, and perspiring, into the nearest chair, exclaiming, "He's gone, Carolyn; he's clear gone, confound him!"

Carolyn drew nearer her father and gazed into his face, to read there the confirmation of what she scarcely could believe. The old man wiped his streaming face with his handkerchief, and stuffed it again into his pocket, exclaiming, "Yes; he's gone! gone!" Then opening wide his arms, he murmured, "But never mind, my dear child; you've got your old father left to love you, and to avenge you, too, if needful! Don't grieve! Come to my bosom! Don't grieve!"

"*Grieve*, sir!" exclaimed the imperious girl, elevating her queenly head, "we do not *grieve* for a traitor! We pronounce sentence on him, and execute it!"

"True, true, my noble girl! There spoke your mother's daughter! Yet," suddenly cried the old gentleman, as by a quick recollection and revulsion of feeling, "what a devil of a kettle of fish this is, my dear! Blame the fellow, what are we to do? Deuce take the man, what are we to say to the

people down stairs? *Say*, Carolyn. Woman's wit is quick! Can you think of anything?"

Carolyn stood in proud and bitter thought for some minutes, and then she smiled with a scornful smile, and said, "Do nothing, sir! Let all go on as was planned; let the band of music take its place in the saloon; let the wedding-guests come, and be received; and *then* leave all the rest to me. And now, my dear father, pray excuse me, as it is time to dress."

"To dress! Why, Carolyn, what do you mean? Are you mad? Dress for what?" asked the old gentleman, anxious to know if perchance *her* idea in any way resembled the plan adopted by himself, from Mrs. Clifton's suggestion.

"No, sir, I am not mad. 'My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,'" said the young lady, extending her hand to the bell-rope, and ringing a peal that presently brought her woman hurrying up stairs and into her presence.

"Darky," said she, addressing her attendant, "go to Miss Zuleime, and to the Misses Cabell, and let them know that I have waited for them some time." The old handmaid went out, and Carolyn turned to her father, and said, "My dearest father, when I am dressed, I will send for you; and we will have a conversation, in which I will tell you my simple plan for getting through the evening. I have not quite matured it yet. Ah, here are the girls. Good evening for a couple of hours, father!"

She opened the door for her father, who just escaped the young bridesmaids, who were coming in.

He went out muttering, "I don't know what she means. I suppose I can have confidence in her. At least, I must for the *present*, and then there is Mrs. Clifton's plan." He went into his own room and arrayed himself in festive garments for the occasion, and then went below stairs to groan inwardly over the numerous arrivals of guests, whose carriages thronged the lawn, and whose servants crowded the piazza, hall, and entries. Presently a servant approached him, and said respectfully, in a low voice, "Miss Clifton's compliments, sir, and will see you in her own room."

The old gentleman hastened thither. He found his daughter ready dressed, and quite alone. Her bridesmaids had gone to make their own toilets.

"Father," she said, "I will not wear the willow for a

recreant lover! I have determined that the festivities shall go on to-night. I will go down and lead off the first dance myself. You, my father, may explain, as you please, that the marriage is broken off, but that the music, dancing, and feasting are not arrested for that reason."

The old man had determined within himself what to speak, but he answered, "My dear child, are you *equal* to it?"

"*Equal, sir?* Try me!"

"Very well, my dear. Come! and I will say—what is proper upon the occasion."

In the meanwhile, the splendid company assembled in the brilliantly-lighted saloon awaited with great impatience the *entrée* of the bridal train.

Made conspicuous in that gorgeous assembly by his black gown and bands, sat the clergyman who was to perform the ceremony.

Georgia—darkly, resplendently beautiful as ever—moved gracefully through the crowd, full of gracious courtesy, yet flushed, anxious, feverish, half-fearing that the bridegroom would appear at this last moment. This fear was aroused by the presence, and the calm, cheerful, self-possessed looks of Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain. At length light steps were heard in the hall. The doors of the saloon were thrown open, and all eyes were turned to see the wedding-procession enter. But instead of a bridal train, came old Mr. Clifton, leading in his daughter Carolyn. The surprise, the wonder of the company was at first silent and breathless as it was profound; but soon a low whisper arose, and, like a low breeze in the leaves, passed from one to another, until the room was in a general buzz.

Mr. Clifton led his daughter into the centre of the saloon, and, with her still hanging on his arm, turned and faced the company, waiting until they should be silent before he would speak. The father and daughter, as they stood there, presented a fine, imposing appearance. Both were arrayed with the gorgeous splendour that prevailed at that day.

The old gentleman had his snow-white hair turned back off his forehead, and carried all down to the nape of his neck, where it was plaited into a queue, and adorned with a large white satin bow, both snowy plait and bow in pleasant relief against the back of the dark crimson velvet coat. His vest and small-clothes were of white satin, and his long hose

of white silk were fastened to the small-clothes below the knee with white satin bows and gold buckles. His slippers were of crimson morocco, with high heels, large bows, and gold buckles. His dress was rather antiquated even for that day; and he stood there waiting for silence with the *suave* and stately courtesy of the old-school gentleman.

Very much like a queen looked the beautiful Carolyn, but very little like a bride, either in her dignified self-possession or in her magnificent array. Her fair hair was carried up above her forehead, and dressed high, in the regal style of that day. Its rich waves and bands were wreathed with pearls, and adorned with a plume of white ostrich feathers, powdered with minute silver spangles. Her neck and arms were bare, but adorned with pearls, and softly shaded with the finest lace at the edge of the bodice and sleeves. Her dress was of rich blue satin brocade, made with long waist, sharp-pointed stomacher, and flowing sleeves and flowing skirt, the edges of the skirt finished with a very deep border of silver embroidery, a lighter border of the same running around the sleeves; the stomacher was embroidered with silver and pearls. Over her skirt she wore a train of splendid lace, lightly embroidered with a running vine of silver. She toyed with an elegant fan of carved mother-of-pearl and marabout feathers. She stood there, as I said, not at all like a bride, either in her gorgeous apparel or her self-asserting manner. She stood there with a gay, proud air, beneath which none could have discerned the deeply-humiliated spirit of the arrogant woman, or suspected the wounded and breaking heart of the forsaken bride. When the murmur of voices which had greeted their entrance had subsided, and silence was restored, Mr. Clifton bowed deeply, and, in the somewhat high-flown grandiloquence of style he had once seen exhibited by a manager of a city theatre, when apologising for the non-appearance of the evening's star, spoke as follows:—

"Ladies and gentlemen, the distinction of your presence here this evening has been prayed, that you might give the honour of your countenance to the espousals of my nephew and daughter. You have graciously accorded us the dignity of your society here for that purpose." An embarrassed pause, while the assembly listened in breathless curiosity and expectation, and he continued, "Ladies and

gentlemen, 'man *pro*poses, but God *dis*poses.' The great Arbiter of destiny has ordained the issue of events otherwise than as we had hoped, planned, and expected. Even last night suddenly came a peremptory order from head-quarters to Captain Clifton to join his regiment instantly, for the purpose of taking the command of a detachment of cavalry, to march immediately to the Indian frontier, to put down an irruption of the Shoshowanawas! Ladies and gentlemen," continued the old gentleman, warming up with his subject, "you know the stern, uncompromising duty of the soldier at such a crisis. One syllable, one single syllable, comprehends his insupportable obligation—'Go.' The man, the lover, the bridegroom must give place to the soldier. As our greatest poet, Walter Scott, has it, the soldier at the sound of the trumpet, must

> Leave untended the herd,
> The flock without shelter,
> The dead uninterred,
> The bride at the altar.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our gallant Captain Clifton has literally left his 'bride at the altar.' But soldier's love may not mourn bridegroom's loss; nor may we deny ourselves the distinction and joy of your presence for the whole night, nor," the old man was unconsciously sliding from his lofty magniloquence down to the plain vernacular, "nor must I disappoint these young men and maidens of their dance to-night. Ho! music there! Strike up the liveliest quadrille air upon your list. Let them dance to the briskest music while they are fresh. Charley Cabell, my boy, come here and lead out your cousin Carolyn!"

Major Cabell advanced, and with much grace and dignity led Miss Clifton to the head of the quadrille, as the music pealed forth.

"Young gentlemen, select your partners!" exclaimed the old man, adding example to precept by choosing the youngest and prettiest girl in the room, and leading her to the place right opposite his nephew and daughter. Soon all the surprise and disappointment were forgotten in enjoyment. The evening was spent in the gayest hilarity—Carolyn Clifton, the forsaken bride, apparently the gayest of the gay. So gay, indeed, was Miss Clifton, that she drew upon herself the severe animadversions of several ladies present, who affirmed

that her conduct was heartless in the extreme—to laugh, and sing, and dance, and jest with such thorough abandonment to pleasure, just after the departure of her lover to brave the ghastly horrors of Indian warfare. Much more did they approve of the pensive manners of Zuleime. Poor Zuleime was all unskilled in self-control; her heart was "exceeding sorrowful," and so she let it appear. The company separated at a very late hour that night, or rather a very early hour of the next morning; those in the neighbourhood departing, those from a distance retiring to the chambers to take some sleep before breakfast, after which they were to set out for home.

CHAPTER X.

THE SISTERS.

OVERTASKED, weary, and exhausted by her long efforts, Carolyn Clifton sought her own chamber, and threw herself, all splendidly arrayed as she was, upon her bed. She had no fear of interruption, for it was not yet daybreak, and her woman would not be up for several hours; so she was surprised, and not at all pleased, when a gentle rap came to the door. She would not answer or move to let the rapper know that she was awake. She was weary, weary with acting for one night, and needed rest. But after the unknown had rapped two or three times, the door was gently opened, and the sweet voice of Zuleime was heard to say, "Sister, I know you are not asleep—will you let me come in?" And, without waiting for an answer, she entered, and softly closed the door, and came to the bedside, saying, "I heard you when you came up and threw yourself down on the bed, and I knew you were not asleep. Let me stay with you, dear sister, won't you?"

"No, no, Zuleime; I wish to sleep," said Carolyn, still pressing both hands to her throbbing temples.

"Well, then, dear Carolyn, let me undress you—you can never compose yourself in that dress;" and the affectionate girl began to take off her slippers and stockings, saying, "I can take off all the small articles, and unlace your stomacher without disturbing you, sister; and then you need not stand up more than a minute to disrobe."

In indifference or abstraction, Miss Clifton permitted the gentle girl to unclasp all her jewels, and loosen her dress, without ever removing her hands, clasped tightly upon her temples, till Zuleime, wishing to take down the elaborate *coiffure*, gently withdrew them, and unwound the strings of pearls, and unfastened the plume of feathers. When the affectionate girl had laid aside all these glittering gewgaws, and freed her long, fair hair, and relieved her oppressed and fevered head, the proud and scornful Carolyn, subdued by the gentleness of her sweet, only sister, looked in her face, read there a strange sympathy, delicate as it was deep, and suddenly put her arms around her neck, drew her head down to her own, and kissed her fondly, murmuring, "O Zuleime! my child, my child! if you knew—"

"I *do* know, dearest Carolyn! Dearest sister, I *do* know it all! all! and feel it—feel it from the bottom of my heart! That is the reason I came in, Carolyn. But I did not come in to disturb you, even by my sympathy. I came in to put you to sleep. Stand up, dearest Carolyn, and drop these heavy robes, and I will throw this light wrapper around you, and then you can lie down again—there."

"Oh, sleep! when shall I sleep again?" bitterly asked Carolyn, as Zuleime laid her head tenderly back upon the freshened pillow.

"Well, don't talk, dear Carolyn, and you will see that God will send sleep." And Zuleime cooled her brow by passing over it several times a piece of ice in a napkin, and laid down by her side, and fanned her, in that measured, monotonous time so inducive to slumber. So slowly she fanned her, resisting all her attempts to enter into conversation, until wearied nature yielded, and Carolyn was asleep. Then, as it was morning, Zuleime hoisted the windows to admit a fresh current of air, but left the blinds closed, to exclude the light. Next, she put all Carolyn's things carefully away, and silently restored the room to order. Then she laid a folded napkin, dipped in ice-water, over the still burning brow, and cautiously left the room, to go and order tea and toast to be ready for Carolyn as soon as she should awake. She found the house below stairs in a great but comparatively silent bustle. The servants, who had scarcely retired the night previous, were engaged in clearing away the disorder of the saloon, parlour, and dining-room, and in

laying the cloth for breakfast for the numerous visitors who had remained over night. Zuleime passed on to the kitchen, and gave her orders, and then silently stole up stairs again to her sister's room.

Carolyn slept long and heavily. Several hours passed before she awoke. When she opened her eyes, and fixed them gratefully upon Zuleime, she raised her arms, again embraced her, saying, "You have comforted me, dear Zuleime."

"And I will comfort you more, dear sister. I know how to do it. How do you feel, Carolyn?"

"Better, my head clearer, my nerves steadier; but a weary weight at my heart."

"It shall go away, Carolyn. I know how to drive it away. But first you must take something."

And Zuleime rang the bell, and told the servant who appeared to bring Miss Carolyn some *fresh* tea and toast.

While he was gone after it, Zuleime bathed her sister's face and hands, and combed out her hair; and by the time she was made comfortable, the servant re-appeared with the refreshments.

After Carolyn had breakfasted lightly (and this was the first food she had taken for thirty-six hours), she fell exhausted back upon her pillow, and said, "I cannot appear this morning, Zuleime. I am tired of acting a part."

"You need not do it, dear Carolyn. The people have breakfasted, and are almost all gone, and the others are going. Carolyn, dear, I saw *Archer* when he went away—"

Miss Clifton was still too proud to make a comment.

"Carolyn, he looked broken-hearted, despairing—indeed, he did. O Carolyn! I think if he could have hoped that you would have made up with him, he would have let his regiment go to perdition rather than not have hastened to your feet."

"Why did he not try, then?"

"Oh, sister, you banished him, and men have some pride. He waited for your relenting, I feel sure!"

Carolyn remembered, with bitter regret, her refusal to let her father go and recall him.

"Carolyn, write to him. The detachment under his command does not march from Winchester for nine days yet. Write, Carolyn; there is abundant time for him to get your

letter and answer it before he goes. Then you will be reconciled and happy. Everything will be restored; and you will comfort yourself by remembering that he would have had to have gone any way, and that he is gone reconciled!"

Miss Clifton shook her head.

"No, Zuleime, I cannot! I should not know *how* to write such a letter. What could I say to him?"

"Say! *I* should know what to say. If you have banished him, revoke your sentence of exile. If you have ascertained that you have done him injustice, tell him so. If you are sorry that you parted in anger, let him know it. If you wish to hear from him before he goes, ask him to write to you."

"I could not—I could not. I never could write such a letter. My heartstrings would crack in the attempt."

"And are you *so* proud? And will you let him go forth to that ghastly Indian war? O God! my flesh creeps only to think of it!" said Zuleime, shuddering. "And will you not retract your false accusation, and revoke your cruel sentence of banishment, and express kind feelings and kind wishes for him about to be exposed to such horrors?"

"I can't! I can't! I *cannot!* My heartstrings would snap with the effort! I can bear sorrow, but not humiliation. I can die, but I cannot be humbled."

"You cannot be humbled by an act of justice, sister. That letter would be only an act of justice. And, oh! it would give him such happiness, and bring you such sweet peace, in place of all this heartburning. Think of it, dear Carolyn."

While Zuleime spoke, a rap was heard at the door, and a servant appeared, and said that "marster wished to see Miss Zuleime in the parlour."

"Think of it, dear Carolyn," said Zuleime in a cheerful voice, kissing her sister's forehead, and then hastening out of the room.

Carolyn *did* think of it. The idea once presented, she could not banish it again; the hope of a reconciliation once raised could not be suppressed. She could think of nothing else. "It was but an act of common justice—it was a duty," she repeated to herself many times, to answer the objections of her pride, which argued, "It is undignified, unwomanly, to make this overture." Then her love, her benevolence, her fears for him pleaded, "It will make him so happy; it will

fill his heart with courage, and his arm with strength for the battle. And suppose he should be killed; what intolerable remorse will be added to your sorrow for him, when you reflect that he died without a relenting word from you, who have been so cruelly unjust to him—that he died under your own sentence of exile! Besides, if none of these things happen, can *you* bear these weary, weary days of estrangement, absence, and suspense—weary, weary days that will slowly, slowly drag themselves through weeks, and months, and years of time?" Oh, no! No, no! She cannot bear that prospect. She will be just—she will do her duty, and satisfy her affection at the same time. *Down, pride!* for she will write that letter. She did write it. She did not read it over again, lest scorn should rise and compel her to hurl it down and set her heel upon it. She set her teeth almost grimly in her determination to protect that gentle, loving missive of sorrow and affection from an assault of her besetting sin, as she sealed and directed it. She then slipped on her dressing-gown, and stole down the back stairs, where she found a boy lounging. She ordered him to saddle a horse immediately, and take that letter to the post-office. Nay, she waited till she saw the boy off, and was sure that none had seen him or the letter he carried. Then she returned to her own room, determining that no soul, not her father, not even Zuleime, should share her confidence and know her condescension.

CHAPTER XI.

MRS. FAIRFAX AND MAJOR CABELL.

ZULEIME went into the parlour and found her father alone. He was sitting in an easy-chair, doing nothing, but apparently waiting for her.

"Come hither, Zuleime," he said.

And when she went up to him, he drew her upon his knee, and passed his left arm around her waist, while with his right hand he smoothed her black hair; and he gazed fondly in her face. He noticed that her cheek was pale, and her countenance pensive, but hoped that it was from the excitement of the night before. He could not bear to think of its being

regret for Frank. He feared to ask her the cause of her seriousness. He disliked to recall Frank in any manner to her recollection. He wished her to forget him, if possible. At least *he* would do so.

"Zuleime," he said, after he had stroked her hair some time, "you know, my love, that your Aunt Cabell and your cousins are going back to Richmond to-day."

"Are they, sir? I did not know it," said Zuleime, turning paler, with apprehension of something that might be coming.

"Yes, my dear, they are. And, Zuleime"—here he paused, then he went on, "you have been thinking, I suppose, that you should have to return with them, to enter upon your school-duties again, as the first of September is so near."

"I had not thought of it, sir; so many things happening put it out of my head. But I am quite willing to go, and can be ready in half an hour."

"Thank you, my dear child. I am very glad to see you so prompt to oblige me; but, my dear Zuleime, I have good news for you."

"Good news, sir?

"Yes, girl, the best news—the *very* best news—news that young ladies always rejoice to hear."

"What news, sir?" she asked fearfully.

"Don't whine, girl; it is not your sentence of death. It is your deed of emancipation—your 'free papers,' as the niggers would say. You are not to return to school any more. Are you not surprised? Are you not rejoiced, now?"

Zuleime was not. She was anxious, foreboding.

"Why don't you speak, my dear? Ain't you glad you're not going back to school—to leather shoulder-braces, and back-boards, and square and compass rules and regulations, that mean nothing, unless they mean persecution and torture! Say, ain't you glad?"

"I think I had rather go back to school for the present, sir."

"Nonsense, now, my dear! Ah! I see how it is. You want to return with your dear Aunt Cabell, and the dear city cousins, especially cousin Charley. Eh, you monkey? You grow tired of the country and your old father, as soon as ever your aunt and cousins talk about returning to the city. Ah, you rogue!" said the old man, chucking her under the chin.

and devoutly praying that he might be right in his conjecture—for, oh! that child's happiness! It lay nearer his heart than anything else on earth or in heaven.

"Dear father!" she said, embracing him, "I do not wish to leave you—indeed I do not. I prefer the country; and I had rather *never* leave you or my home."

"Dear little rogue, now don't tell me that; I know better, you know. And it is quite natural, and nobody blames you. The young bird must leave its nest, and the young girl her home, when she becomes a wife. Your mother left her parents, and came home here with her husband. So do not think, my love, that your old father will charge you with selfishness for wishing to leave him—no, not wishing to *leave him*, but wishing to go with one who is to be your husband."

Zuleime dropped her head, to conceal the deadly pallor that crept over her face.

"Yes, dear Zuleime, you will soon return to Richmond, though it will be not as a school-girl, but as a happy bride—as Mrs. Major Cabell. What a sonorous name and title for my little, romping Zuleime! Here, Charley Cabell, I have broken the ice, now come and speak for yourself!" exclaimed Mr. Clifton to Major Cabell, who was going by the door. Major Cabell came in, passing the old gentleman, who had seized his hat, and, not trusting himself to look at his daughter, rushed out of the room. Zuleime remained standing where he had placed her, when he put her off his knee, panic-struck, stupid, until Major Cabell took her hand, and attempted to lead her to a seat; then snatching her hand away with a shudder, she asked almost wildly, "Cousin Charles, when does father want this marriage to come off?"

"As soon as my dearest Zuleime will consent to make me the happiest of men!" replied the commonplace wooer, attempting to recapture her hand; but she retreated shuddering, and asking in a frantic tone and manner, in great contrast to her calm words, "Cousin Charles, do me a favour! Do not press this matter for a week or so."

"Heaven forbid that I should hurry a lady, though that lady be my own little cousin and betrothed; only fix the day and I will rest content, so that it is not a far distant day," he said, recapturing her hand, throwing his arm around her waist, and drawing her towards him.

"Please, don't! Let me go, Cousin Charles!" exclaimed the girl in great distress, struggling to free herself.

"Please don't let me go, Cousin Charles! I don't intend to, pretty cousin, until you tell me when you will give yourself to me!" replied Major Cabell, kissing her all the more heartily because she strove to escape.

"You know what I meant. Let me alone. It is unmanly to behave so. Don't make me hate you!" was on her quivering lips and in her flashing eyes, as by a sudden effort she threw his arms off and sat down; but then she recollected her father, and the cruel power that Major Cabell seemed to possess over him, and she choked down the indignant words, and said instead, "Please, don't hurry and worry me, Cousin Charles! this is so very sudden! I am sure I never dreamed you would ask for poor me for years to come yet. I am so young."

"So young! Ah, Zuleime, that is a piece of pretty little womanish hypocrisy—a little finesse that belongs to your character, and is inherited from your French mother! So young! Now, my pretty childish cousin, you know you have received an offer of marriage this very week; and that, indeed, has accelerated my proposal. Fair Zuleime, a man does not care to see his young betrothed bride courted by another!"

"*I know that!*" replied Zuleime in a peculiarly sad voice, moving to the other end of the room.

The slightest gesture of avoidance of him by the girl seemed to act as a provocative on him; so he followed her, and clasped her in his arms, and, laughing, almost rudely kissed her, begging her between the kisses not to set his heart on fire by her charming prudery and petulance, but to fix the day, like a good, sensible girl as she was. Almost frantic with rage and shame at being so freely handled, the Clifton blood rushed to her brain, and, forgetting her father's interest and everything else, she dashed her hand violently into his face, and before he recovered from his astonishment, broke from him and escaped—her heart beating with one thought—one sudden, joyous thought—that, come what might, she never could be either forced or persuaded into a marriage with Major Cabell, because she was already a wedded wife—no set of circumstances whatever could make it her duty, or make it even possible, for her to marry

Major Cabell. In all her sorrows, that was one blessed truth to sit down and rest upon. All her duty was now due to her husband; and, with a youthful wife's enthusiasm firing and strengthening her heart, she thought she should stand as upon a rock, secure against a sea of troubles. Poor child! she had yet to learn that no position founded on a fault is for a moment safe. Several things soon forced themselves upon her memory and grieved her heart; her father's unknown but certain danger, her own promise of secrecy in regard to her marriage, the necessity of giving some definite answer to Major Cabell, and the obligation pressing upon her to prevent, by all and any means, the highly improper and extremely offensive demonstrations of passion from her suitor. She determined to write to Frank, tell him all that had occurred, and ask his advice and direction; and to do this it was necessary to gain time, and to give no false promise in the interim. Already was Zuleime beginning to taste the bitter fruits of her stolen marriage, and might have exclaimed, in the perplexity of her distracted heart and brain—

> Oh, what a tangled web we weave
> When first we venture to deceive

While Zuleime's heart was beating so fast with many emotions, her father sauntered into the parlour, where he found Major Cabell caressing and soothing his afflicted face.

"Well, Charley, boy! How is it with you, eh? Could you win a hearing from my little girl, eh? Give her time, you know, eh?" said the old gentleman, affecting a lightness of heart which he was very far from feeling.

To his surprise, Major Cabell laughed heartily, still coaxing his ill-used phiz.

"What's the matter, Charley? What's amused you, eh?"

"Your girl! By my soul, governor, I shall end in falling seriously in love with that girl! I didn't fancy her much at first, to tell you the truth. She was entirely too good humoured — always laughing; and I had a fancy for marrying a shrew, just for the spicy fun of taming one! The same instinct, governor, that makes me like to spring upon the back of the most vicious horse I can find, and ride, and lash, and spur, and fatigue the very soul out of his body, until I break his back or his temper—eh, governor?"

The old man's florid cheeks became pale with rage, and he felt an impulse to kick the puppy out; but a terrible necessity tied his tongue and hands, and Charles Cabell went on laughing and talking to this effect: "Now, then, having a fancy to marry and tame a shrew—a real live, vicious, beautiful vixen—I did not want the spiciest part of the sport taken out of my hands by fathers and mothers, and pastors and masters. I shouldn't have thanked any of you for presenting me with a model wife, already smoothed down and polished to my hand. D—n your pretty pieces of perfection! I'll none of them—flat, insipid nonentities! formed and *re*formed, and modelled and *re*modelled, and rubbed down and polished until they all look as much alike as beads on a string. No, none of your polished gems for Charles Cabell—the bright, pure, rough, sharp ore! Now, of Zuleime, I thought her far too much educated, too good-humoured, too polite, too docile, too much of the young 'lady,' too little of the wild young animal, and flat and insipid in consequence; so I cared very little about her. But, ha! ha! ha! I never was more mistaken in my life. She's a prize, I tell you! A prize of the first class, look you! I coveted a shrew, I've found a virago! full of blood and fire, strong and vicious, I tell you! Ha! ha! ha! Think of her dashing her little hand in my face when I went to kiss her, and, before I recovered my eyesight and senses, throwing me off as if I had been a child, and escaping! Ha, ha, ha! I under-estimated her strength! Never mind! let the little tigress look out for the next time I get her in my arms!"

The old man's bosom was filled to bursting with suppressed passion, but he answered calmly, "Oh! she's young, she's young—a spoiled child, a spoiled child; be patient with her—she means well. Give her time—be patient with her."

"Patient with her! Why, uncle, I wouldn't have her a bit different from what she is! She's charming, delightful, piquant, spicy! Patient with her! Why, gov., I shall end in falling desperately in love with her! But I say, nunc! make the little virago fix our marriage-day, will you? I have got to go out now and have Spitfire saddled; those fellows never draw the girth tight enough, or fix the bit firm enough, and I have to pull her head off to stop her sometimes, for she is the foul fiend incarnate when she gets to

running. I'll make Zule ride her some time, to see which will get the better of the other. Say, gov., let me have my answer when I get back—do you hear?" And, seizing up his riding-whip and cracking it against his boots, he went out.

The old man boiled over, he clenched his teeth, and shook his fist—nay, shook his whole person, as he turned livid with rage; then his arms fell helplessly by his side, he sank into a chair, dropped his face upon his hands, and groaned aloud. He felt a pair of arms encircling his neck, and a sweet voice murmuring in his ear, and he raised his head to see Zuleime, and to hear her ask in loving tones, "Father, what is it?"

He put his hand tenderly around her waist, and drew her gently to his knee, and said, while he gazed remorsefully into her face, "I am a villain, Zuleime! A hoary-headed villain!"

Zuleime placed her hand upon his mouth to stop the dreadful words, and pressed her lips to his brow, with a look and manner of the profoundest love and veneration.

"Yes, a hardened, persevering sinner, Zuleime! For I intend to persevere! I intend to give you to Charley Cabell, my child," he said, gently removing her hand, and still gazing on her. He continued, "I love you so much, Zuleime! I love you so much! But, dear child—he's coming! —dear child, tell me when you will marry Charley—Tuesday three weeks or four weeks? Don't let it be longer than four weeks, my girl!"

"Father, will you tell me *why* you wish me to marry cousin Charles?"

"I cannot! I cannot! My child, I cannot! It is for your good, I hope! Some day I will, perhaps. Tell me, now, that's a good girl. What day will you give this little hand to cousin Charley?"

"Father, I can't possibly give an answer for a week yet; indeed, father, I cannot!"

"Come, now, nonsense, my child; why can't you? Here is Charley now! Come!"

"I cannot, father!"

The old gentleman kissed, and coaxed, and almost wept; a manner of attack so hard to be resisted that, had Zuleime been really free, she would have sacrificed her own and

Frank's hopes, and yielded; but Zuleime was not free, and therefore was as firmly proof against persuasion as she would have been against force. Two powerful motives operated in prevented her from confessing her marriage—first her promise to keep it secret, and then the fear of precipitating some violent scene between her father and cousin, or some fatal catastrophe to the household. To end the conflict, and to gain time to consult Frank by writing, was what she most wished now. Finally, she promised to give Major Cabell his answer in a week, and to marry him, *if she should ever marry anybody*.

With this promise, Major Cabell seemed satisfied, and, with his mother and sisters, took leave of Clifton. And Zuleime retired to her own room, full of self-reproach for her own deception.

CHAPTER XII.

SUSPENSE.

A WEARY week passed away. Zuleime had written to Frank; and Carolyn, we already know, had despatched a letter to Archer. But the week had passed away, and no answer to either had come from Winchester. Had the sisters confided in each other, such mutual confidence might have soothed the soul-sickening anxiety of *one* at least. Carolyn would have known that some accident *must* have prevented Frank Fairfax from receiving or answering the momentous letter of his youthful wife, and she would have felt that the same cause had probably operated in the case of Archer Clifton. But the sisters did not intrust their secrets to each other. Zuleime was withheld by her sacred promise. Carolyn by her pride. But the wife bore the pain of suspense far better than the maiden. The wife had perfect faith in her young husband, and knew that some adverse chance had hindered his getting or replying to her letter. The maiden knew that she had unjustly banished her lover; and she had no faith in the love that endureth all things. Carolyn had never suspected the depth of that calm, secure, habitual affection, which had from childhood grown, until now. While life, and love, and hope had flowed smoothly

on, her emotions were serene and moderate; but now that the quiet stream had been stemmed by rocks and breakers, it was lashed into fury and roared in whirlpools. The calm sentiment rose to turbulent, maddening passion. Her days were restless, her nights sleepless, until, as the week wore away, her nerves were wrought to such severity of tension that you might know that at the end of uncertainty, whether that were joy or sorrow, they must alike suddenly give way. Towards the last of the week, she had privately besought her father to ride to Winchester, and see the detachment off, and bring her the last news of it. The request had been confidential; yet do you feel all that it had cost her haughty heart? During the absence of Mr. Clifton, suspense was wrought up to agony. Her days and nights were feverish, delirious, and so confused with each other that she scarcely knew the fitful, disturbed visions of the night from the wild and anxious broodings of the day. The day upon which her father was expected back was the acme, the crisis of her suffering. Oblivious of pride and caution, careless of exposing herself to the malign sneers of Georgia, or the rude comments of the servants, she sat in the piazza, watching the road by which the carriage should come—one wild, anxious, despairing hope possessing her. "The drowning catch at straws;" and she, in her despair, had clutched one mad possibility, and clung to it, until to her weakened, confused, insaned soul it seemed a probability, and then almost a certainty. It was the hope that Clifton might return with her father — oh, yes! — that Clifton might resign his commission and come back to her. Oh! if indeed he loved her, as he had a thousand times sworn, if he sorrowed over their estrangement only half as much as she did, no hope of glory, no fear of disgrace would keep him back. The more she brooded over this, the more likely, the more certain it appeared to be; and she sat and gazed up the dim forest road.

The sun sank to the edge of the horizon, and lit up all the mountain-tops with fire, and then went down. And when she could no longer see, she still sat and strained her ear to catch the distant sound of wheels.

The moon arose, and flooded all the mountain scenery with silver light, and flashed upon that distant bend of the river, until it seemed a silver lake, lying among the dark hills,

and pointed the peaks of White Cliffs, until they stood up and glittered, like an enormous row of spears, against the deep blue sky.

At last, at last the very distant sound of wheels came faintly like a doubt to her ear, and faded away again; then it came more distinctly, nearer, and a moving object appeared upon the road; and she knew indeed it was her father's carriage—she saw and recognised it in the moonlight. It turned into the lawn-gate, rolled rapidly around the circular drive, and swept swiftly up to the entrance, where it stopped. The steps were let down, the door opened, and old Mr. Clifton got out, followed by—no one.

Carolyn had bent eagerly, unconsciously forward; now she started up and caught her father's hand, and gazed silently, imploringly into his face for the news she could not ask for.

"The detachment has marched, my dear child—marched the morning of the day upon which I reached Winchester, and two days before it was expected to have gone: so, you see, I could not get a sight of either Frank or Archer; they were thirty miles on their road before I reached the city. Can't think what could have been the reason of the new order, to anticipate their departure by two days. However, cheer up; no use fretting, my dear—no use fretting! The family have supped long ago, of course; have they kept my supper hot for me? I am as hungry as an old wolf," said the old man.

Carolyn did not hear him; her hold relaxed upon his arm, her hands flew up to her head, and she turned, as one struck with sudden blindness, and tottered into the house. It was so dark in the shady piazza, screened from the moonbeams by interlacing cypress-vines, that the old man did not see her state. He hastened into the house, where another awaited him with equal anxiety.

Zuleime's private hope had been that Frank would seize the opportunity of Mr. Clifton's visit and confess his marriage, and invent some way of delivering her father from the toils of Major Cabell.

"What news, father?" she asked, meeting him in the hall.

"What news? Why, I am as hungry as a bear, my pet! That's the news! I stopped to supper at L——. But, my life! They like to have poisoned me with *fried* beefsteaks, and heavy biscuits, and green coffee. Couldn't touch a

morsel, child! And now I am starved up to a savage pitch! What have you got for supper?"

"Turtle soup and old crusted port, among other things, father," replied Zuleime, waving her own anxiety for the sake of satisfying him.

"TURTLE SOUP and OLD CRUSTED PORT!" exclaimed the old man, in an extacy of delight. "Why, where on earth did they come from?"

"The turtle came from a ship at Norfolk, and was sent hither by Major Cabell, who added a dozen of port of his own importation," said Zuleime, dying with anxiety to hear from Frank.

"Ah-h! that was kind! *He's* a fellow! He'll make a magnificent husband and son-in-law, Zuleime! I hope you know how turtle soup should be made?"

"Father, I know it should be eaten quite *hot*, and it is on the table by this time. Come in."

The old man needed no pressing, but went into the dining-room and sat down at the table, with a face radiant with delight. Zuleime waited on him, although there was a servant in attendance; and when he had freely partaken of turtle soup, devilled crabs, a roasted fowl, &c., and washed them down with port wine, she brought him a cup of fragrant Mocha coffee and his case of cigars. And he sipped the coffee with an air of infinite leisure, and then lit a cigar and puffed slowly away, as if eternity was before him.

"Father, what news from Winchester?" again asked Zuleime, though her hopes had fallen very low. "What news, dear father?"

"What's that to you, my pet? Will you let me digest my supper in peace?"

Zuleime sat down, but looked so anxious that her very *looks* worried the old gentleman, and he said, "Don't you know, girl, that indigestion is very dangerous to a man of my time of life? It may bring on apoplexy! Don't worry me!"

Zuleime veiled her anxious gaze; but even then the paleness of her cheeks annoyed her father, and he testily inquired, "Now, what is it to you? I can understand Carolyn's anxiety, I cannot comprehend yours at all! There, now, go and send my wife to me."

Zuleime arose to obey; but before she went, she threw her

arms around his neck and asked, "Dearest father, *only* tell me! Were our friends well? Have they gone? Did they send any message?"

"Only answer you three questions at a time! That is reasonable! However, I can answer all in one: I have not seen our friends; their detachment left Winchester twelve hours before I reached there. And now I'll tell you what I did not like to tell Carolyn, poor girl! namely, that the detachment marched two days earlier than was intended, upon account of despatches received from Fort ——, praying for speedy succour in a reinforcement. The savages have been massacreing and scalping there at a most tremendous rate! It is really a very dangerous service, Indian warfare! God grant that our young friends may return to us safe! Why don't you go along and tell Georgia to come to me?"

Zuleime kissed her father, settled the cushion under his feet, and went on her errand. That despatched, she sought her own chamber, and lay down to collect her thoughts. No letter or message from her husband, and her promise of secrecy in regard to her marriage binding on her as ever; and next week she must give an answer to her father for Major Cabell. She was confident that one of two things had happened: either her letter had never reached Frank, or else his answer had been lost; and by the transaction only one week's respite had she gained for her father, for next week her refusal must be decided and final; and then what might not the consequence be to him? These thoughts excited her mind and kept her awake; and, despite her determination to sleep, and her efforts to do so, she heard every passing hour strike. It was soon after one o'clock that she had fallen into a fitful slumber, when she was awakened by the sound of a gay, high voice, intermingling merry words and joyous laughter; indeed, there seemed to be not only one, but many voices, talking and laughing in the most jocund manner. And strange, passing strange! it seemed to come from her sister's room, which adjoined hers. She listened a while—the words became fewer, but the laughter grew wilder; and then it struck upon her frightened senses that Carolyn was a maniac, talking, laughing to herself! Springing from her bed, and without even waiting to slip on a gown, she ran into the passage and knocked at her sister's door, and attempted to push it open. It was locked on the inside; and all her efforts to force an

entrance were vain, and all her intreaties for admission were answered by peals of unconscious laughter. At last she ran to her father's door and rapped loudly, exclaiming, "Father, father! get up, get up! Something, I am sure, has happened to Carolyn—something dreadful! Get up, get up!"

The old man was hard to awaken, even by the efforts of Georgia, who was aroused at once, and came and opened the door for Zuleime; and all this time the sound of loud talk, high laughter, and wild snatches of song, as from several excited people rather than from one, issued from Carolyn's chamber. At length, by the united exertions of his wife and daughter, the fatigued and drowsy old gentleman was aroused and placed upon his feet, and made to

> —— understand a horror in their words,
> If not the words.

He threw on his shawl-gown and hastened to Carolyn's door, which was instantly forced open.

And what a sight met their eyes!

There stood Miss Clifton, arrayed in her gorgeous bridal costume, looking gloriously beautiful, though certainly as no bride ever looked before. The raging fever had given the brightness and richness of the carnation rose to her complexion, and imparted a supernatural light to her eyes, that burned and flashed, and seemed to strike fire as they sprang from one to the other of the intruders with a mad, joyous, defiant glance.

The alarm of her father was unlimited, unspeakable. He darted from the room and almost precipitated himself down the stairs, in his haste to mount and despatch a servant for the family physician. And while he was gone, Georgia and Zuleime, by coaxing and humouring the phantasy of the poor girl, succeeded in undressing her and putting her to bed; she still raving about her marriage, and sometimes breaking out into a wild laugh, and once telling Georgia that *she*, being a married woman, had no right or business to be officiating as bridesmaid.

It was near morning when the doctor came. After examining the state of the patient, he pronounced her disease to be brain-fever, brought on by over-excitement of the nervous system. He wrote prescriptions and remained with her until they were administered; and then he departed with a promise to return early in the forenoon.

Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain was summoned, and lost no time in hastening to the sick-room of her daughter-in-law, as she chose to call Carolyn.

For many days the struggle between life and death went on; and no one, not even the medical attendant, was able to form an opinion as to which power would eventually conquer.

Mrs. Clifton had taken her station by the bedside of the patient as permanent nurse, and she constantly refused to yield her post to any other person; and it was to her vigilant attention, quick perceptions, and intelligent treatment, that all the family ascribed the recovery of the girl. For the crisis came and passed, and Carolyn Clifton lived.

But no sooner was the patient pronounced out of danger, and the excitement of anxiety over, than the nurse herself fell ill; and Mrs. Clifton, exhausted, prostrated, entered her carriage and was driven to Hardbargain.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARCHER CLIFTON'S SKETCHES.

As soon as Mrs. Clifton reached home, leaning on the arm of her maid, she walked up stairs and entered her son's deserted room; and when her attendant had relieved her of scarf and bonnet, she lay down upon his lounge, and sent Henny for Kate Kavanagh. In less than half an hour Kate entered. And the lady turned to her and said, "Catherine, my dear, I must take you into my confidence—yes, and into other people's, too, whether they approve it or not. Draw Archer's writing-desk up here to the side of the lounge. I want you to write a letter to him." Catherine's brow crimsoned, and she trembled very much as she obeyed. "My dear Catherine, I am sure you will be discreet, and never speak of what I am about to intrust to you. I can rely on you?" said the lady interrogatively, raising those feverbrightened dark eyes to the girl's face. Catherine nodded quickly in her usual way, when the words would not come. "You see, my dear child, this most unhappy quarrel between Carolyn and Archer is causing a great deal of unnecessary suffering to both; and Carolyn, as the frailer of the two, is

nearly dying under it. Her brain-fever was caused by it; and it was as much as Dr. Barnes and myself could do to bring her safely through it with life and reason. This estrangement between them must not continue, or she *will* die. She is not so strong as she looks to be; indeed, she is very delicate, like her mother. Archer is far on his western march now, and cannot return, of course; but he must write to her, and comfort her. I wish you to write and tell him so. Now, then, child, you know the object. Open the desk, and lay out the paper, while I try to think what I want said, and how I want you to say it." Catherine's hands quivered as she turned down the leaf of the desk, and mechanically laid the paper out on the top. "Just date it, dear child, and then I will tell you how to begin." Catherine dipped her pen in ink, and was just about to put it to paper, when something there caught and held her eyes, and she gazed with dilating pupils, and trembled more than ever.

The paper before her was covered with a water-coloured sketch of Marguerite of France at the siege of Damietta, and the ideal face of the royal heroine was the real one of the humble Catherine herself; and in the corner of the paper were the initials A. C. He had taken *her* homely features as his notion of those of the heroic queen of St. Louis; and as she gazed, her heart shuddered with a strange, wild emotion of blended wonder, joy, and remorse. The nature of the maiden was becoming vaguely intelligible to herself.

And Mrs. Clifton did not see her trance, but lay upon the sofa very weary, with her hands pressed upon her temples, trying to settle in what manner she should address her son upon this delicate subject. And Catherine forgot everything in the sketch before her, and the tumultuous, blissful, painful emotions it excited. An abyss was suddenly thrown open in the depths of her heart, whose existence was unsuspected till now. *Now*, was she sorry that the marriage between Archer Clifton and his cousin was broken off, by mutual consent? She tried very earnestly to feel sorry, for she believed it her duty to be so. She forced herself to remember Carolyn's illness, and Archer's own suffering, in consequence of the estrangement between them. But, oh! there lay that picture before her eyes, with her own plain face idealised, glorified up to a high, pure, divine beauty, such as it had

never, even in her highest, holiest, most inspired moods, possessed. And a voice from her profound heart whispered, "Oh, yes, and he could make me really beautiful and glorious as his ideal there; for he could make me good, and glad, and great beyond whatever I could make myself, if he chose!" She reproached her heart severely for its seductive whisper. She offered up a silent prayer to God to forgive her, and save her soul from secret sin. She called herself foolish, presumptuous, treacherous. But, oh! in spite of all these would sparkle up from the depths of her spirit sprays of gladness, as if there had suddenly sprung within an everlasting fountain of joy. Yet again she blamed herself most bitterly. She repeated that despairing complaint or confession of David, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." She almost realised its truth. She silently cried to God to enter her heart, and expel its secret sin.

"Well, child, are you ready?" inquired Mrs. Clifton, withdrawing her hands from her temples, and looking towards the entranced girl. Kate did not hear or see; her soul and senses were absorbed in the subject before her. Yet she did not think or hope about the future. It was the present, the present that absorbed her heart, despite of will, resistance, and conscience.

"Kate, are you asleep or in a trance?" asked the lady, gazing at her.

The maiden started, and blushed deeply.

"Catherine, what are you thinking of?" she repeated, fixing her dark eyes upon the girl, until they seemed to burn into her soul.

Kate looked guilty and bewildered, recovering herself by an effort, and answered, almost at random, "This is not letter-paper, madam; it is Bristol-board."

"Oh, well! there is writing-paper in the other department of the desk, my child; get it out."

Kate examined the contents of the desk, and then replied, "There is no letter-paper here, whatever, Mrs. Clifton."

"What are those?"

"Only cardboards and sketches, madam."

"Sketches? That is just like Archer, to keep his sketches in his writing-desk. His writing-material will no doubt be found in his portfolio. But let me see those sketches, Catherine. I have not seen them yet, and they will be something

new to me—almost like a recent letter from Archer. I like to look over his drawings; they always mean something apart from their subject, as it seems to me. I often think his sketches form a running commentary, though an involuntary one, on his life and thoughts! Hand them to me, my child."

"These are only old historical subjects," said Kate, with visible reluctance to produce them.

"Pass them over to me, my dear. If their subjects are as old as the Chinese 'History of the Creation,' they will nevertheless be eloquent to me of my son's present mood, of the state of his heart, and the progress or the retrogression of his mind. You cannot imagine, Catherine, the anxious curiosity of a mother to catch furtive glimpses of the interior of that heart she cannot always enter, and which is often hidden, too, from its possessor. 'We know not what manner of spirit we are of,' Catherine. For instance, do you know your own heart or mind? In all hearts lie depths below depths, never known to the owner until some earthquake of sorrow or of passion throw them open to view! There are in all minds powers beyond powers of achievement or of endurance, unsuspected by their possessor until some emergency calls them into action. But give me the drawings, Kate; they will refresh me like a talk with Archer."

Catherine lifted them, *en masse*, and handed them to Mrs. Clifton, who took and examined each separately and leisurely.

"Um-m," she said, smiling gently, as she recognised their subjects. "'Marguerite of France at the Siege of Damietta;' 'Joan of Arc at Rheims;' 'Margaret of Anjou at St. Alban's;' 'Last interview of Lord and Lady Russell;' and all these battle-axe heroines wearing the likeness of my serious, domestic Catherine! In truth, Archer has put you through as many characters and costumes as though he designed you for a tragic actress, in the heaviest line."

Kate Kavanagh did not like that.

"But two of these characters bear any affinity to you, my dear. I cannot fancy any similitude between the tender and fiery Marguerite—that 'falcon-hearted dove'—or her haughty and remorseless namesake of Anjou, and my grave, gentle Catherine. But the high and holy enthusiasm irradiating Joan's face, and the noble resignation of Lady Russell's countenance suit your striking features very well. But I

am talking like a mediocre stage-critic. Captain Clifton has a very high opinion of you, my Catherine. Pray try to merit it, my dear girl," concluded the lady, with a little pardonable motherly pride.

Kate Kavanagh looked down, and fingered the pens and wafers, for she felt the lady's eyes gazing through and through her—reading her very soul.

"By the way, Catherine, have you seen Captain Clifton's last work of art?"

"No, madam." ("I wonder why she calls him 'Captain Clifton' to *me*—she never did so before," thought Kate.)

"It is a highly-finished miniature of Miss Clifton, painted on ivory. He had it set in a plain gold locket, and has taken it away with him. I saw him hang it round his neck, and lay it near his heart."

Catherine honestly believed that she was glad to hear this, for it seemed one more stay to keep her thoughts right.

"And that, Catherine, is one reason among many others I have for knowing his indestructible love for Carolyn; and that is why I feel no hesitation in having this letter written to end this foolish quarrel, and to restore peace to these two unhappy young people," said Mrs. Clifton, looking, Catherine thought, very strangely at her—*so* strangely that the maiden felt her cheeks burn with a vague sense of humiliation.

She asked herself, Could Mrs. Clifton have read what had been passing in her mind? Well, if so, that was another band to bind her thoughts to the right.

"Now, then, to your task, my child. You will find paper in Captain Clifton's portfolio." She spoke gently as ever to Kate, but still called her son "Captain Clifton," as if to widen the distance between them.

Kate felt troubled at this, and then took herself to task for a state of mind so morbidly acute to impressions that she noticed everything, even that trifle. She searched and found the writing-materials in the portfolio, and went to work and wrote, from Mrs. Clifton's dictation, a letter, full of gentle rebuke, and kind, motherly counsel, to Archer Clifton; and all to the end that he should write immediately and reconcile himself to Carolyn, who was extremely ill, and whom his mother felt assured, she said, that he must be most anxious to propitiate. The letter was sealed and

despatched; and the lady, thoroughly worn out, and leaning upon the arm of Catherine, sought her own bedchamber.

The next morning Mrs. Clifton was so weary that she could only leave her bedchamber to lie upon the sofa in the shady parlour, where she could be at hand to direct the operations of her house-servants—now engaged in cutting out and making up the fall-clothing for the negroes. Catherine came early to assist in this onerous task. It was in the afternoon, while the lady was still reclining on the sofa, and Catherine standing at a work-table basting a linsey-wolsey frock-body, when a horse was heard to gallop up into the yard, a man to jump off and hasten up the steps of the piazza, and, the instant after, old Mr. Clifton entered the parlour, looking very much flurried and alarmed.

"What is the matter? I hope Carolyn is no worse?" asked the lady, anxious, yet calm.

"No! Yes! A great deal better, of course, since the turn last night! Most malignant form of the disease, and growing rapidly worse every hour. *I tell you it is!* The doctor affirms it!"

Mrs. Clifton gazed at him in a sort of self-possessed perplexity.

"She has got the small-pox, madam."

"The small-pox?"

"Yes, madam, the confluent small-pox, in its worst form."

"You astonish me! I trust, I believe you are mistaken!"

"No, I wish to Heaven I was! No, madam! doctor's opinion!"

"Why, how on earth? Sit down, Mr. Clifton. Kate, my dear, wheel that arm-chair around."

Catherine obeyed, and the old gentleman sank among its soft cushions, and took out his pocket-handkerchief and wiped his face.

"How on earth could she have got it?" asked Mrs. Clifton.

"Ah! Lord Almighty knows! Came spontaneously, I do suppose. You noticed those two pimples that appeared upon her forehead after the crisis of the fever passed?"

"Yes; but I thought nothing of them."

"Nor did we at the time. But, at any rate, that was the first appearance of the eruption, little as we guessed it at the time. You see, she naturally began to grow better when this other disease began to break out, I suppose;

indeed, I have no doubt it was the coming of the small-pox that arrested the fatal termination of the brain-fever. Well, you see, last night, after you had left her so much better, we intrusted her to the care of Zuleime, who did not seem to be so much worn out with watching as the rest of us. So Zuleime sat up with her; and she tells me that before midnight her face was sprinkled all over with those pimples. And this morning, when I first saw her—" the old man's voice broke down for a moment—"oh, it was dreadful! Her beautiful fair face, neck, bosom, arms, all covered over with that horrible eruption! It had all run together in one mass. We sent off to hasten the arrival of the doctor, who, when he came, pronounced the disease to be confluent small-pox. Oh, it is horrible, horrible! even if her life be spared. Disfigured for life! What a fate for a woman! I drove Zuleime out of the room against her will; for she, dear, generous girl, wished to stay and tend her sister. Georgia told me at breakfast that she had just got a letter from her father, who was ill, and that she must have the carriage to go to Richmond. She did not show me the letter, for she made haste and started almost immediately. Everything falls out disastrously at once. Now, what am I to do? I cannot procure a nurse to that disease, for love or money, in this neighbourhood. Advise me what to do. The necessity is so urgent."

Mrs. Clifton was now sitting up, supporting her head upon her hand, and essaying her strength.

"I must go back and nurse Carolyn myself."

"You? Now, never suppose, my dear sister, that I have been hinting for you to return and finish killing yourself for us. I would not permit it, if you wished it ever so much. I'll lock and bar the doors and windows to keep you out, first. But think, and counsel me as to the best thing to be done. There is no one at home but Zuleime; and even if I were willing she should risk taking the dreadful disease, she is so very young and inexperienced that I should be afraid to trust her sister's safety in her hands. But I am not willing that she should run any risk to *herself*—that's flat. But what's to be done?"

"There is not a servant on your plantation, or on this farm, fit to be trusted in such a case. I must go and take care of my daughter myself."

"D—d if you shall, ma'am! I'll bar my doors and windows against you first, I tell you! Why, in your weak state, it would be suicide!"

The lady maintained her purpose against Mr. Clifton's vehement opposition, and her calm persistence must have conquered, but Kate Kavanagh mildly interposed, by saying, "Let me go!"

"You!" exclaimed Mr. and Mrs. Clifton in a breath.

"Yes; I am not a bad nurse. I have had considerable experience with sick people."

"But you've never had the small-pox—you're not the least marked," said Mr. Clifton.

"No, sir, I have never had that disease."

"And you are willing to risk taking it?"

"Yes, sir!"

"What! and you a young girl! Ain't you afraid of catching it, and having your face spoiled?"

"Yes, sir, I am afraid of contracting it."

"Why, that is a plain contradiction of yourself; you say you are willing to risk it, and afraid of catching it. I do not understand you at all."

"Catherine is so simply truthful and straightforward!" said the lady, smiling. "She means that she is perfectly conscious of the extent of the danger of contagion, but that she thinks it her duty to brave it, nevertheless. Is not that it, my dear? But, Catherine, much as we thank you for your generous self-devotion, we must not permit you to think of going. I must do that, for I have had the disease. If you were to persist in your purpose, my dear girl, you would almost certainly get the small-pox; and then your life, or, at the very least, your beauty, would be sacrificed."

"Beauty! If I had it and were to lose it, dear lady, there is no one to care for it!"

"Yes, *I* should care for it, my Kate," said the lady, putting her arm around the girl's waist, and drawing her closer.

"In fine, my good girl, you shall not go if you are afraid! That's certain!" said Mr. Clifton.

"Oh, sir, that would not interfere with the faithful discharge of my duties as nurse. You had best let me go, and go at once, sir. There is no time to be lost, surely. Is any competent person with Miss Clifton now, sir?"

"No one but a coloured woman, and I really *must* hurry

back. And so, if you really *do* feel disposed to go, my dear girl—is she a good nurse, Mrs. Clifton?"

"Excellent, sir! But, indeed, I do not like her exposing herself in my stead. I should not permit her to do it, indeed, if my power seconded my will," added the lady, sinking back fatigued upon her sofa cushions.

Old Mr. Clifton was evidently inclined to accept Kate's services. Mrs. Clifton was obliged to yield—more to the weakness that overpowered her frame than to the arguments set forth by Catherine. It was settled, then, that Kate should go; and she quickly put on her little straw bonnet and black silk scarf, and entered the gig that the old gentleman borrowed from the lady to convey the girl to Clifton.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DISCIPLINE OF AFFLICTION.

THE mansion-house at White Cliffs was all but deserted. The very house-servants, pretty mulatto girls, more afraid of destroying their good looks than losing their lives, had retreated to their own dens, feigning illness as an excuse to keep out of the reach of contagion. Catherine was introduced at once into the sick-room. That sick room, what mind can conceive, or what pen *should* describe it? Only those who have nursed a patient through that worst form of the most loathsome pestilence can realise its revolting horrors. To see any human being looking as the once beautiful Carolyn now looked. Her very features almost obliterated, while —fill up the pause, you who have seen the horrors of that pest: it was worse than any form of illness—it was worse than death and decay. Disgust almost overmastered pity, and Catherine turned away, shuddering with sickness of body and soul. Old Mr. Clifton cast one agonised look upon the ruin, and, unable to bear the sight, rushed from the room. Catherine turned to her duty. The wretched patient was tossing about in high fever, and tearing her arms and bosom under the intolerable irritation. That work of destruction must be stopped first, Catherine knew. Catherine caught her right hand, and it took all her strength to hold that hand,

whose flesh seemed as if it would drop off under the pressure, while she secured it to the bedstead; then she captured the other dashing, tossing hand, and confined it in the same manner; and then she looked at the state of her own palms. Oh, offensive duty! No wonder, she thought, that the beautiful Georgia had fled to Richmond, and the two pretty housemaids were extremely ill in their attic! Had *she* a wish to follow their example? No; for now all selfish fears were lost in deep compassion for the poor, forsaken wreck of beauty that lay there at her mercy. She returned to her duty. She administered to her patient an opiate, to soothe her restlessness; took a sponge and tepid water, and thoroughly cleansed the surface of the skin, and anointed face, bosom, and arms with a fragrant emollient, to allay the intolerable itching. She then released her hands, and laid them easily upon the counterpane. Lastly, she ventilated and darkened the chamber, and took her seat by the bedside, to fan her patient while she slept. And deep was her satisfaction in watching that quiet, refreshing sleep. It is not my intention to lead my reader through the dismal days that followed in that sick room, until the "secondary fever," the crisis of the disease, came and passed. Catherine nursed her patient tenderly, faithfully, night and day. Carolyn's life was spared, but her peerless beauty was gone for ever. Her luxuriant, fair hair was all lost, and her head was as bald and discoloured as her face, and that —!

In that darkened chamber, and in the midst of physical suffering and weakness, Carolyn had had no opportunity of ascertaining the extent of the ravages the disease had made in her beauty—if, indeed, she knew the nature of the former, or thought about the latter; but as she approached convalescence, and was able to sit up in bed and converse, she felt an invalid's childish curiosity to look in the glass, and frequently requested her gentle nurse to hand her one. But Catherine, dreading the effect of the shock, steadily refused to comply with her wishes in that respect, and perseveringly kept the room darkened; and the sick girl, too weak to persist long in any controversy, yielded the point.

But one day, while Catherine was at her breakfast, and old Darky supplying her place by the bedside of the patient, Carolyn said in a tone that admitted of no denial or even delay, "Darky, hand me that hand-glass from my dressing-table."

And the old woman impulsively, thoughtlessly obeyed her, and brought it. Carolyn was propped up in bed. She took the mirror, gave one interested look into it, plucked off her little cap, gave another horrid glance, and, uttering a long, low cry of despair, sunk back insensible upon her pillow.

Old Darky flew from the chair to the patient, and from the patient to the bell, in great trepidation—ringing peals that brought all the household hurrying in alarm to the room. Old Mr. Clifton, being nearest at hand, arrived first; and when he saw and understood what had happened, he seized the hand-glass and threw it out of the window, and laid hold of the heavy toilet mirror and sent it flying after. Then he drove old Darky from the room, forbidding her, for a stupid and dangerous maniac, ever to show her face there again. And all this time, Catherine, who had entered so quietly that no one saw or heard her, was silently trying to restore the swooning girl. As Carolyn, with a deep sigh, opened her eyes, Kate motioned for everyone to leave the chamber; and all noiselessly withdrew. Carolyn shivered and shuddered several times, as she raised her eyes appealingly, despairingly to Catherine, who was bending tenderly over her. Catherine thought it best to answer that silent appeal by speaking at once to the point.

"My dear Miss Clifton, you must not think that your face will continue to look anything like it does now, for it will not, indeed; for though it is very much discoloured, it is not much pitted, and the discolouration will wear off in a few days. And as for your hair, Miss Clifton, that will grow out very soon, and be even more beautiful and luxuriant than before, on account of the renewal of the skin; so, dear lady, take comfort and do not look in the glass again until you are better." And all this time that Catherine spoke in this gentle manner, she was bathing the girl's face and hands with bay-water, and her tender touch was even more soothing than the sedative liquid. Catherine was almost impelled to say, "Have patience—bow to the will of God, and try to learn the lesson He intends to teach in this." But she felt the hour had not come for speaking such words—that she herself must have patience, and wait for the time when she might minister to her spiritual need.

Up to this period, Miss Clifton did not know who her nurse was. She had heard her called "My dear child," or

"My good girl," by the physician and by her father; and they were the only visitors to the room, except old Darky, who came to relieve the nurse at meal-times, and who simply called her "Miss." And if once or twice she had heard her called Catherine, still she never imagined her to be Kate Kavanagh, but some hired attendant; and, indeed, in the languor of illness she thought nothing about it. A few days after this, however, when she had grown more composed and resigned, and while she lay watching Catherine's quiet movements through the room, she said, "My dear, good girl, my gentle nurse, tell me your name? I *do* pray sometimes, and I wish to know your name that I may ask God to bless you for exposing life, and health, and beauty for one whom mother, and sister, and servants all deserted." Just now, for the first time, it flashed like lightning through Kate's mind that all the danger of infection was over, and that she might now thank God for preserving her from contagion. Yes! she had forgotten herself for some time past, but now her heart leaped for joy and gratitude, and she thanked God before she replied to Miss Clifton's question, and said, "My name is Catherine Kavanagh."

"So you are Kate Kavanagh! Hoist up the blind. Come to me. Let me look at you," said Miss Clifton, rising on her elbow. Smiling, because unconscious of the hidden meaning in her words, Catherine approached and sat down by her bed; and Carolyn took both her hands, and

> Fell to the perusing of her face,
> As though she'd learn it off by heart.

She pored over the broad, square forehead, looking strong, but not beautiful, for all the bright chestnut hair was pushed carelessly aside; she gazed upon those dark grey eyes under their long black fringes—such deep, transparent wells of darkness and light they were; she dwelt upon the beautiful lips, and then her glance roved over the symmetrical form, and she thought she had never seen so perfect a figure; and she sighed and raised her eyes again to the remarkable countenance, with its large features, pale and cadaverous now with a long season of confinement, fatigue, and loss of sleep, and grave with thought, and earnest with deep feeling; and she could not settle it to her satisfaction whether Kate Kavanagh was a sublime beauty or a fright. Upon the

whole, the girl interested and pained her. And she continued to hold her hands with a nervous grasp, and pore over her face and form as freely as though she had been only a dreadfully fascinating statue; while Kate blushed under the infliction, and finally drew her hands away and sat down.

But every day Miss Clifton's confidence in, and esteem for Kate Kavanagh increased; and every day Catherine sought to draw her patient's soul to the only true source of light, strength, and consolation, and to sanctify this terrible affliction to her spirit's good. The obligation to do this pressed upon the girl's conscience heavily, as if it were the hand of God. It was in vain that she said to herself, "I am nothing but a weak, erring girl. It would be presumption in me to speak. It might be received as impertinence, and do more harm than good." Still the answer arose from the depths of her heart, saying, "Speak the fitting words at the fitting time as they arise within your mind, for they are the inspiration of God's spirit." And wisely, lovingly, reverently she spoke them as occasion called them forth. The right thing was always said at the moment it was needed. "Words spoken in season are like apples of gold on plates of silver." Many a willing but bungling Christian would have failed to do Carolyn any good, for Miss Clifton was a very difficult subject. There is nothing so hard of impression as pride, and scorn, and jealousy. It was the dominion of that infernal triumvirate that made Lucifer an impracticable subject among the angels. But Catherine was moved and guided by a higher power than herself. Of herself she dared say nothing on divine subjects. She only spoke when strongly, irresistibly impelled to do so; and her words were blessed to her patient and sanctified to her own spirit.

Catherine had a powerful coadjutor in her good work. It was the sorrow in Carolyn's heart. And, ah! who could sound the depth of that sorrow? Loving as passionately as she had loved, sinning against that love as cruelly as she had sinned, punished for her sin as terribly as she was punished, and now ruined and hideous in person, and wrecked and despairing in mind, to whom could she cry in her sharp agony but to God, her Creator and Father? Whose arm was strong enough to lift her from that horrible pit but God's? And the All-Powerful, the All-Merciful was helping her every day.

The great strength, the great vitality of her sorrow was the thought of Archer Clifton. Could she have hoped for a reconciliation with him, however distant, all else might have been borne; but with that death's head of hers, such joy might never be hoped—ought never to be wished. No, she was as the leper, set apart from human love—at least, from conjugal and maternal love—for ever and for ever! This was hard—this was well-nigh intolerable!

She would no more grace the saloon with her surpassing loveliness—the pride of her family, the ornament of their house. Her heart would no more swell with exultation when, on entering the drawing-room, in the full glory of her peerless beauty, she would hear a murmur of admiration pass through the company. No. If she should ever enter a saloon again, she would make a tremendous sensation, truly—but it would be one of astonishment, pity, and perhaps disgust. And that thought was dreadful, dreadful to the proud young belle! But, oh! it was as nothing to the feeling that her household gods were broken and ruined for ever—that her hopes of domestic happiness were gone for ever! For underneath all the pride, and vanity, and scorn of the young belle had been the woman's thought, the woman's hope of the coming, long, calm days of wife and mother joy; yea, as surely as under the burnished satin bodice had beat the heart of flesh! But all these were over now; the proud, vain aspirations of the belle, and the woman's deeper, purer hopes—both crushed by one fell blow! All was lost in the world; nothing was left but Heaven!

—— if God would take
A heart that earth had crushed.

Many are driven by the storms of life to the heavenly Father's bosom. It is for this that the tempests of sorrow are sent; and the sooner that divine sanctuary is sought the better, for hard and harder will beat the storm until its end is answered. And too often all is lost, or seems lost, before we consent to save ourselves. With Carolyn, all the treasures of her youth were gone—health and beauty, love and hope. Something like this she breathed to Catherine, in a weak, despairing mood; for only in a miserably depressed state of mind and body would the proud girl deign to complain.

"Dear lady, do not say so sadly that all is lost, for ever,

lost. Dear lady, *nothing is ever lost.* It is impossible. The Lord, in His divine wisdom, may withdraw His gifts, but they are not lost—they have gone into His keeping."

"I do not comprehend you. My poor good looks, such as they were, are surely gone for ever. Nothing can restore them. And O Catherine! you do not know, you cannot understand all the blessings, the hope, and the joy of my life fled for ever! You are a child; you do not understand it!"

"Perhaps I do not, lady, and perhaps I *do!* Seek all that you have lost in God! He has withdrawn His gifts, your treasures, that he may draw you to Himself! They are safe in His treasure-house. If you have lost the beauty of the fair roseate complexion, He can endow you with a higher beauty, emanating from the soul; if you have lost human love, He can satisfy your soul with the richness and fulness of divine love that never faileth; and for your broken earthly hopes He can give you the heavenly hope that never dieth."

"Oh! but it is the lost earthly hope, personal beauty, and human love that were so dear to me—so dear to me!" exclaimed the poor girl, bursting into a passion of tears.

"And he can restore even those! 'But seek ye *first* the kingdom of Heaven, and all these things shall be added to you.'"

"Ah, child! *Nothing* but a miracle could give me back dead happiness; and the days of miracles are over!"

"No, no! There is nothing in the Scripture to warrant that saying. The days of miracles are *not* passed. Until the days of human faith and divine omnipotence are passed, the days of miracles are not passed. Anything that *seems* to me right that I should have, I will pray God that, if it *be* right, He will give it me, though it should appear to my ignorance utterly impossible!" Then Catherine abruptly stopped, fearing that she had said too much; and she silently prayed for a faith that should be as far removed from presumption as from despair.

Carolyn recovered very slowly. It was weeks before she left her bed, and then many more weeks before she left her room.

It was a glorious day in autumn when she first walked out upon the lawn, supported between Catherine and her father; and as soon as she set foot upon the greensward,

some cattle that were browsing there—by some caprice to which cattle are subject—started off as if seized by sudden panic, and ran huddling together confusedly, and precipitating themselves towards the outer gate; and so weak were the poor invalid's nerves, and so morbid her mind, that she burst into tears, and declared that the very brutes fled from before her face, as from one less human than themselves! Nor could any argument of Mr. Clifton's or of Catherine's disabuse her mind of this absurd idea. She begged Catherine to take her back to her chamber; and for many weeks no intreaties could induce her to leave it.

Zuleime came freely to her sister now. She had her harp brought into her room; and she soothed the recluse with music every day; and at last Kate Kavanagh, who had gradually merged from nurse into companion, added her own rich, full-toned voice in accompaniment. The Misses Clifton were both very much surprised to see this "gift of gracious nature" thrown away upon a poor girl, with no hopes or prospects but manual labour for her living; and Zuleime, who could be thoughtful and benevolent in the midst of anxiety and sorrow, proposed to give Catherine lessons on the harp. But this was soon stopped. Both Zuleime and Catherine perceived that the music, far from soothing, seemed to irritate the invalid; and for this reason, Carolyn had lost her voice. She could never sing again; and even in speaking, her tones were harsh and rough. The harp was banished, and books were brought; and while Zuleime worked, and Carolyn fondled a little King Charles that had been bought for the childish invalid, Kate read aloud to the sisters. And now it was that the world of *written* poetry broke upon the maiden's delighted view. Before this, she had never read a line of poetry in her life except hymns—for Mrs. Clifton had judiciously suppressed all books of that nature; but now the treasures of Milton, Goldsmith, and Cowper were opened to her ardent mind. Oh, those days that followed the convalescence of Miss Clifton—those evenings after Carolyn had gone to rest, when she and Zuleime would go into the summer-saloon, and spend the hours in music or poetry, or in talk as musical and as poetic! Those evenings, spent with a refined, warm-hearted girl like Zuleime—they were unfitting her for her prospective hard life of coarse labour and coarser association. She felt that it was so;

and she determined to leave. She only waited until Mr. Clifton went to Richmond and brought back his wife; and then she bade them all good-bye and returned home—not to the farmhouse of Hardbargain, but to her brother Carl's cabin.

She needed to commune with herself, and be still. She wished to descend into the unsounded abysses of her heart, and examine, though with awe, the mystery of iniquity that in some unguarded hour had germinated there—this growing passion for a man betrothed to another. No matter if the marriage was broken off for the present. They loved each other; and *that* was the true betrothal. As for herself, she would, with the grace of God, turn out this dangerous bosom guest, so divinely fair as to seem like an angel of light rather than the tempting demon that it was; and to do this effectually, she must break every tie that held her to that fair illusive life she had lately led. She must forsake every association connected with her sin and folly. She loved Mrs. Clifton—loved her first for herself alone, and then as the mother of one whose name she dared not now to breathe even to herself. She enjoyed the congenial society and occupations at White Cliffs and at Hardbargain; and now she was the most welcome visitor on the list of both families. But she must forego the privilege this gave her. More than all she had enjoyed her pleasant life at Hardbargain. The cheerful housekeeping cares she had shared with its mistress, the conversations over the pleasant tea-table or the social work-stand, the books, the newspapers, and the evening music, and the society of the admirable Mrs. Clifton—these formed the externals, the body of her happiness; but the interior, the soul of her joy, was that *there* was the home of Archer Clifton—the place pervaded by his spirit, redolent of him! But all these *must* be abandoned! They might have affinity for her nature, but they did not belong to her lot in life. And see what they had brought her to—even to an insane passion for her benefactor! And now it was high time she had come to her senses and self-recollection. She was a poor girl of the humblest birth, born in poverty and destined to poverty. She must leave off spending evenings with refined and accomplished young ladies in elegant saloons, if she wished to do her duty in that station to which God had called her; and she must give up the society of Archer Clifton's

mother if she wished to forget him; and she must betake herself to the coarse, hard, but dutiful life of her brother's cabin.

Catherine went no more to White Cliffs or to Hardbargain; and when Mrs. Clifton sent for her to come and spend a day, she returned a gentle answer that she could not leave her grandfather.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BLACK SEAL.

THE evening was chilly—just chilly enough to make the novelty of the first fire of the season a luxury—and so Zuleime had ordered a bright little fire to be kindled in the parlour, and the tea-table set out there; and she had changed her white muslin dress for a fine crimson poplin one, and began to think of the pleasant autumn evenings, when all the family would gather around the hearth, with needlework, and books, and social chat; and, like a child, she was forgetting the threatening dangers that lay before her, and those she loved. Her father's trouble, Major Cabell's expected arrival, Frank's peril in distant warfare, the difficulties of her own position—all were for a while forgotten in the dream of cheerful fireside affection and comfort, as she moved about the room closing blinds, dropping curtains, and wheeling easy-chairs up near the fire, and thinking with what a fine smile of genial satisfaction her father would come in and look around upon the change before he dropped himself into that largest easy-chair. Mr. Clifton had ridden to the village, but was expected back to tea; and there sat the tea-table a little aside to be clear of the chair near the fireplace, and radiant with snowy damask and shining silver.

Carolyn came in, pacing softly, slowly; and, turning her eyes around the room with a look of languid approval, she sank into an arm-chair. Zuleime went to her immediately, and relieved her of the large shawl she had worn through the chilly passages, and closed her dressing-gown, and settled the lace-border of the delicate little cap, and placed the softest cushion under her feet, and then kissed her forehead, but did not speak. Carolyn repaid her with a silent look of affection. Since the departure of Catherine, Carolyn had sunk into a

sort of mute despondency, in spite of all the care and affection of her sister, for it was her moral nature that needed help, and the young Zuleime could not "minister to a mind diseased."

Mrs. Georgia Clifton entered and silently glided to her seat. Unconsciously, Georgia became a dark and terrible picture: she sat upon a low ottoman at the corner of the fireplace, her head supported by her hand, and all her glittering ringlets falling like a glory down each side of her darkly splendid face; and through that strong light and shadow her form palpitated, her bosom heaved and fell, her moist lips dropped apart, and her eyes gleamed with a set, steady fire, as though some passionate trance wrapt and spell-bound her soul.

Zuleime was moving about the room and giving directions to a servant who had brought in cakes and preserves; finally, she sat down and took out her knitting—it was a pair of white lamb's-wool socks for her father—and knitted while she waited. She had not long to wait.

The door swung open silently, and Mr. Clifton entered with a newspaper in his hand, but looking so shocked and troubled that all, with one accord, raised their eyes in silent inquiry.

"Poor Frank! poor Frank!" exclaimed the old man, as if he was ready to burst into a passion of tears.

"What—what of Frank?" asked a faltering, gasping voice, which he could not recognise as belonging to either of the three young women present, yet answered mechanically—

"Those bloody Redskins! Those ghastly, horrible savages!" he cried, throwing himself into a chair.

"There—there has been some fighting! Is— Tell me! tell me! You know what I want to know. *Is Archer safe?*" exclaimed Carolyn, bending forward; while, sallow and fierce, the eyes of Georgia gleamed the terror and anxiety she dared not express.

"Archer is safe!" said Mr. Clifton.

And the light of a sudden joy flitted across Georgia's dark face, and Carolyn sank back with a look of grateful relief. And no one noticed Zuleime, and no one knew that she had spoken.

"Yes; Archer is safe, thank God! And a thousand times

thank God that Archer is safe! But Frank—poor Frank! My God, what a fate! Who shall tell his mother?"

"For Heaven's sake! what has happened to Mr. Fairfax?" asked Georgia.

"There, there! read for yourself," replied the old man, getting up and handing her the paper. He did not mean that she should read aloud, perhaps, but he forgot—he was confused with trouble.

And she took the paper and read: "FROM THE INDIAN FRONTIER.—HORRIBLE MASSACRE NEAR FORT PROTECTION.—Despatches from our western frontier bring the most painful account of a horrible massacre of a part of our troops by the Indians in the vicinity of Fort Protection. On Monday, the 15th ultimo, a small reconnoitring party left the Fort, under the command of Lieutenant Fairfax. They had proceeded about a mile on their way when they fell into an ambuscade of Indians, and were cut to pieces in the most shocking manner. The body of Lieutenant Fairfax, in particular, was so horribly mutilated as to be scarcely recognisable. The full particulars of the massacre, given below, are copied from the *National Sentinel*."

Then followed a long account of the catastrophe, with every revolting circumstance detailed with horrid distinctness. The old man heard and groaned at intervals; Carolyn shuddered and wept by turns; and even Georgia's voice broke down for pity and horror. But *she*—the wife, the widow—she, the fearfully bereaved—she sat and listened to all the murderous story.

She heard all, all: how he had been set upon by six or seven; how he had singly battled with them when all his party were lying dead around him; how then he tried to escape such fearful odds; how he was felled and dragged down from his horse; the young, warm, beating heart was cloven through; the fair hair torn from the bleeding skull; the fingers chopped off for the sake of the ring—Frank wore but one, a simple gold ring, with a coral setting that she had taken from her slender forefinger and contrived to squeeze past the joint and get it comfortably upon his little finger—and they had cut it off in their haste to get it. How real that trifle made the whole horror, that might else have seemed like a nightmare! She sat and heard it all; and no motion, no tear, no cry escaped her.

At last, when the reading was over, and they were released from the spell of horror, old Mr. Clifton thought of Zuleime, and feared its effect on her. He turned to look at her; at first he saw nothing amiss.

She sat so naturally, though still, with her knitting in her hands, as though only stopped for an instant, and her face turned in a listening attitude towards Georgia, who had ceased to read.

"It is all over; there is no more to hear, Zuleime, my darling," said the old man.

But she did not move or speak. She seemed to look and listen intently.

"Zuleime," said her father gently.

She remained perfectly still.

"Zuleime!" he exclaimed yet louder. She did not hear.

"*Zuleime!*" he cried a third time, going towards her to seize her shoulder.

But he started back in affright. They were all gazing at her now.

"My God! she is dead!" ejaculated the father.

"She is mad!" exclaimed Georgia.

They gathered around her. She knew it not; she sat there as if frozen into that attitude—her face white and hard, her lips bloodless and stiff, and her eyes still fixed towards the spot from which Georgia had been reading, but beyond it—beyond it, into the far distance, as if fascinated by some spectacle there of unutterable horror.

"Zuleime, what are you looking at? Speak to me, my child!" cried her father in great distress.

He might as well have expected a statue to speak.

Carolyn took the knitting away, which, through all this, had dangled between her stiff, unconscious fingers. Georgia rubbed her hands; Carolyn bathed her face; the old man cried to her—all in vain! They might as well have performed these offices for the dead.

They lifted her up, and laid her on a sofa; her limbs hanging helplessly, like those of a dead or swooning girl. But she was neither dead nor swooning. Wherever they moved her, her eyes were still fixed, in that bright, burning, horrible stare, upon the distance, as though the vision of the ghastly spectacle that had been conjured up before her imagination followed her wherever she was turned.

They took her up stairs, undressed, and put her to bed. All night long she lay in the same state.

In the morning there was no change, except that the muscles of the face had fallen, the cheeks sunken, the chin dropped, and that concentrated, intense gaze into vacancy was more burning bright than ever. It was as though a burning soul was consuming the unconscious flesh to death; or as if a body was turning to dust and ashes with the spirit still imprisoned in it.

"She is sinking, and must die, unless she can be moved to tears," said the doctor.

But what should move her to tears? Was there anything on earth that she could weep for now? Her old grey father had knelt, weeping, by her bedside, and torn his silver hair in anguish, without causing a single eyelash to quiver over that fixed, burning eye! What should make her weep? Plaintive music? She could not be made to hear it! The very songs that she and Frank had sung together? The sound was drowned in the groans from that scene of blood!

Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain had come over; but though she was a woman of great skill and experience, all her efforts failed to rouse the girl from that fearful trance, which seemed likely to end in death.

"Send for Catherine! If anyone in the world can do her good now, it will be Catherine. There is, besides, a freemasonry between girls of the same age that makes them instinctively understand each other. If a child were in a stupor, I should certainly send its favourite playmate, another child, as the most likely being to rouse it," said Mrs. Clifton.

"Ah! My Lord! this is worse than any stupor! I wish to Heaven she would fall into a stupor," replied the father.

"I know it; for her mind is not dulled, but seems wrought up to the highest pitch, and intent upon some imaginary vision of horror. She must be brought out of it. She must be subdued. Send for Catherine."

Mr. Clifton went himself in the gig, to bring the kind girl.

When Catherine arrived, and while she stood by the side of the stricken, insensible girl, Mr. Clifton said to her, "You see, my dear child Zuleime seems to have been very much attached to this poor young man; and the news of his

horrid death was broken to her suddenly, and it has just thrown her into this state! Look at her eyes! What do you think they see—in imagination, I mean?"

"They see that scene of massacre—they see the death of her lover," said Kate, looking piteously at her friend (for Zuleime was her friend) and brooding deeply over some idea.

"The doctor says she must die if she cannot be made to weep! O Katey, my dear, *dear* girl! if you can *only* make her weep! I will give you—I was going to say, I would give you half of all I have in the world! Come, try, That's a good girl! You girls all know each other's little fool-secrets and love-nonsenses. Come, try. Do you want to be left alone with her?"

Kate shook her head in that quick way usual to her when strong feeling kept her silent; but she added, "Give me her keys."

The old man seemed surprised, but looked about and discovered the required articles in her little work-basket, and handed them to Kate.

"I only want to search and see if I cannot find something that was his—some little token or keepsake, you know."

The old man took his station at the foot of the bed, while Kate pursued her search. She knew what she was looking for—it was a curl of fair hair. She had caught a glimpse of it once, when Zuleime had opened a box in her drawer, and had immediately shut it again with a deep blush; and now she knew whose hair it was, and that the sight of it would bring tears to those burning eye-balls, and consciousness to that frenzied brain. She found it. She could have wept herself as she raised it from its little hiding-place. She took it to the bedside, put her hand gently over those glaring eyes to darken them, and break the spell if possible; and then lifting her hand off again, she held up the lock of hair by the end, letting it drop into a fair, shining ringlet before the eyes of the girl, as she said, "Zuleime, do you know whose hair this is?"

The poor scathed eye-balls fixed upon it, softened, melted from their searching glare; a change came over her face; she extended her hand, and caught the tress as if fearing to lose it, and pressed it with both hands to her heart. Then her bosom began to heave convulsively, as with a great coming agony. Catherine caught her up, for she seemed

about to suffocate. It was only the coming of the flood of tears—yes, the *flood*, for she fell upon Catherine's sustaining bosom, and sobbed and wept—such a deluge of tears that the girl's dress was dripping wet, and it grew a wonder where so many came from. And Catherine's heart was smitten, and she wept, too—wept till she grew so weak she could scarcely sustain her burden. And then old Mr. Clifton came round and relieved her, taking Zuleime into his arms, and laying her head against his shoulder, saying, "There, cry! Cry on its father's neck, as much as it wants to! It shall cry its fill, poor thing! poor little heartbroken thing!"

And she *did*, abundantly; but pressed and kissed her father's neck the while for his tender words. This melted down the old man's heart so that he said, "They shan't plague you! None of them shall! Charley Cabell shan't come here to trouble you—*that* he shan't! Come what will, you shan't be forced to marry him! No, no, my darling; my poor little heartbroken darling, you shan't! I'll see him in perdition first, and myself, too! There, don't stop! cry it all out on father's neck! Don't stop; catch your breath and begin again! That's right! That's a good girl! Oh, she'll cry a plenty this bout! Once I couldn't bear to hear women cry. It was because I did not know that, if the grief was not cried out, it would stay in the heart and burst it. I will never try to stop a woman from crying again. Cry on, my poor little thing!" And so most tenderly, but half-childishly, the old man talked, and petted, and cooed over her.

Catherine slipped down stairs to prepare tea and toast.

When she came back, she found Zuleime lying back upon the pillow exhausted, but composed, and still pressing the little lock of hair. Catherine set down the little waiter, and took a bowl and napkin, and washed her face with cologne and water, and then brought the cup of tea.

Zuleime shook her head mournfully.

Catherine stooped and whispered, "For your father's sake, dear. Look at him."

Zuleime raised her eyes to the old man's grief-worn, anxious face, and then extended her hand for the cup, and drank the tea.

While Zuleime was resting in Catherine's arms and drinking the tea, a knock was heard at the door; and when

Mr. Clifton opened it, a servant appeared and told him that Major Cabell had arrived, and wished to speak with him.

And the old gentleman set his teeth, and immediately went below.

CHAPTER XVI.

MR. CLIFTON'S RESOLUTION.

"WELL, old twopence-ha'penny, how d'y' do? Family all well at last, eh?" said Major Cabell, advancing to meet Mr. Clifton, as he entered the parlour.

The old gentleman extended his hand gravely, and welcomed his visitor to White Cliffs. Then he rang the bell and ordered refreshments; but Major Cabell declined the latter, and inquired after the ladies.

"My family are all in affliction! D—n it, Charley, you know it! Curse that Indian war! My dear Carolyn scarcely recovered from the effects of that loathsome pestilence, before here comes the news of that hideous massacre of poor Fairfax and his men, and just overwhelms my little Zuleime!"

"Zuleime? my dear little wife? I trust that nothing has been permitted to afflict *her?*"

"The news of Fairfax's horrible death shocked her into a sort of appalled extasy, which lasted for twelve hours, and from which she was only roused to break into such tears and sobs as I never heard before, and hope never to hear again."

The old man wished to prepare Major Cabell gradually for the announcement he intended to make of the marriage about to be broken off. He wished to touch his heart, to excite his sympathy, to awaken his generosity. He even hoped—for people will have wild hopes in extremity—that Major Cabell might anticipate his wish, and resign his claims. He never was more mistaken in his life.

Major Cabell listened in grave silence to his speech, and then in high displeasure exclaimed, "By my soul, sir, this is a very astonishing and most offensive thing you tell me! Why should Zuleime grieve thus immoderately over the death of this young officer? Will you explain that?"

"Yes. I *might* say because he was her intimate companion in her own home all the summer, and was soon after leaving it so barbarously slaughtered; that is quite a sufficient reason for the tender-hearted child to grieve excessively. But I will not deceive you, Major Cabell. She loved this poor young man."

"Sir! Mr. Clifton! By Heaven, sir!"

"It cannot be helped, Charley. Hearts cannot be bound by parchment and red tape! She loved this poor Frank Fairfax, and her heart is broken by his sudden dreadful loss. Her grief, poor thing! must have its way. She shall not be troubled!"

"And pray, sir," began Major Cabell, speaking with deliberate scorn, "how long shall this faithless girl be permitted to weep over the memory of that fellow, before she is required to give her hand to one who might have claimed it as his right long ago?"

"Charles Cabell," said the old man, speaking slowly and sadly, "is it possible that you *can*—that *any* man could wish to marry a broken-hearted girl, mourning over the grave of her freshly-murdered lover?"

"*Wish* to marry her? Wish to marry Zuleime? Give her to me! Give me Zuleime! Only give her to me, and then see! She is my right! I claim her by your promise; and I would take her now!"

"But you are certainly mad! You would be miserable with her!"

"*Should I?* That is my affair. Only give her to me! Come, let me have her to-day, or to-morrow, and I will take her home to Richmond with me," said Major Cabell vehemently, almost fiercely.

Old Mr. Clifton looked up at him in surprise, amounting almost to fear.

Have I ever described Major Cabell to you? He was a small man, with clear-cut, sharpened features, and pale face, surrounded by light brown hair and whiskers, with very handsome dark-brown eyes, but with a certain latent ferocity in the eyes, and grimness about the thin, set lips. Somehow or other, he irresistibly reminded you of a hyena, especially when he happened to laugh that thin, ungenial laugh.

The old man looked at him in surprise, almost amounting to fear, and then he said, "But she does not love you *now!*

She cannot love you *yet!* She loves Frank in his shroud better than anyone left alive!"

"I do not care! She must forget Frank, and love me! Women can be made to feel or feign anything by one who understands them."

"But her heart is breaking, I tell you!"

"It must stop breaking and nerve itself to life."

"She is weeping her life away! She is a Niobe, I tell you—a living fountain of tears!"

"She shall dry them and smile! See if I do not make her do it! Pooh! it is baby love, all this. Do you think a girl of her age can feel any lasting love, or grief, or enduring passion of any sort at all? Pooh, pooh! I tell you if her lapdog were killed, she would blubber and weep as much over its death as she does over this other puppy's fate! But, once for all, Mr. Clifton, I tell you I do not intend to be put off, or in any way annoyed by this girl's grief and petulance. It is not well for you, her, or myself, that it should be indulged. Give her to me at once, according to your promise; and afterward I shall know how to deal with her far better than you seem to know."

"And you really wish to marry her in her present state, and take her home with you?"

"Yes! what objection? A wedding-party is not an indispensable accessory to the ceremony. A bridal-journey from here to Richmond would be a very good substitute; indeed, since the catastrophe of the last wedding-party at Clifton, I think the bridal-journey would be in the best taste."

"Umph! and you would marry her so, and so take her away?"

"Certainly."

"Brute!"

"Sir?"

"*Brute,* I say! She would rather lie down with Frank in his bloody grave than marry you! And *I* would rather lay my child there ALIVE than give her to you! There, it is said. Now, I hope, you understand me."

Major Cabell brought his two fierce brown eyes to bear upon the old gentleman, and gazed as if he thought him bereft of his senses. Then he spoke in a peculiarly thin, smooth, distinct voice, "Do you mean what you say, sir?"

"Yes, I do. There!"

"And have you duly considered this, sir?"

"Yes, I have!"

"And you know and are prepared to meet the consequences?"

"Yes! Do your worst! There!" said the old man, setting down his foot.

Major Cabell rose and walked up and down the floor in deep, perplexed thought. To say that he was surprised at this sudden, unexpected rebellion and daring on the part of Mr. Clifton would not be sufficient. He was just *astounded*, and could not surmise where the strength of the old man to oppose him, with his claims and his power, could come from. He thought some external aid had been given; he never guessed that it was the internal victory of conscience over cowardice.

Old Mr. Clifton also rose and stretched himself, expanding his chest, and taking a long, deep breath of intense relief and satisfaction, saying, "Thank Heaven, I feel better; feel more like a man than I have felt for ten years. Now, let the worst come, I can meet it."

Major Cabell glanced sideways at him, and continued his thoughtful pacing up and down the floor. He was possessed with a sort of ferocious passion for Zuleime—a passion fanned to fury by opposition. He was not one to bend his pride to sue; and yet he must have her—soon, too!

Old Mr. Clifton, now feeling and looking so much better and franker, and remembering that Major Cabell was his guest as well as his relative, went up to him and held out his hand, saying heartily, "Charley, give me your hand. I do not know what you are going to do, but I know that I am ready to meet what comes. In olden times, mortal foes shook hands before they entered upon a deadly combat; in our times, the executioner and his victim exchange courtesies; and the humanity of it is a touching comment upon the cruel necessities of our legal and social code. Let us not be more ungracious adversaries than they. Give me your hand. You are welcome to Clifton as long as you please to give us your company. Sport is good now on the mountains, and you can amuse yourself as you please."

Major Cabell paused in his walk, and placed his hand in the open palm of Mr. Clifton, saying, "I will take you at

your word, sir. I will remain your guest for a few days. I will hope that what you have said in regard to the marriage of myself and your daughter has been spoken in haste, and under the influence of anger. I trust that you will review your words. To-day you speak from excitement; to-morrow I hope that judgment will dictate your reply. You will remember that *I, too,* had something to complain of in the fact that my affianced bride, or one that I considered such, should have been so ill-guided, or should have so ill-guided herself, as to suffer her affections to fall into this entanglement. But we will say no more about it now, for I see Mrs. Clifton about to enter."

Georgia entered, indeed, smiling.

Old Mr. Clifton seized the opportunity, and, while Major Cabell was paying his *devoirs* to the beauty, excused himself, and left the room to go and see how Zuleime was getting on, and to re-assure her if necessary.

As soon as he had left the room, Georgia drew Major Cabell off to a distant sofa, and they sat down and entered upon a long, confidential conversation; and when it was ended, they arose and separated with looks of great satisfaction.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WIDOWED BRIDE.

A FEW days after the incidents recorded in the last chapter, Mrs. Georgia Clifton entered Zuleime's room. The poor girl was sitting in an arm-chair near the window, idle, as was never her habit before, with her hands lying languidly one over the other, and her eyes fixed upon vacancy.

The beauty went to her with her soft, winning way, and took her hand, and stole her arm over her shoulder, and said tenderly, "Zuleime, my love, do not sit here by this open window. Let me close it, and lead you to the sofa."

There is nothing so quiet as despair, except death; there is nothing so docile as despair often is. The beauty knew this by a satanic inspiration, and calculated on it. Zuleime suffered herself to be led to the sofa, which was wheeled up near the fire, as she would have permitted herself to be led

anywhere else. Georgia sat down by her side, and passed her arm around her waist, and said, "My dear, I think you love your old father—do you not?"

The poor girl raised her eyes mournfully to the lady's face, as if she did not understand.

"You love your father. You would not be willing to see him ruined in fortune and degraded in honour, would you?"

Still Zuleime kept her eyes fixed upon the speaker, with an expression of hopeless imbecility.

"My dear child, let me be explicit; and try to understand me, Zuleime. It is of vital necessity to your father that you should. Will you listen to me, Zuleime?"

"Yes," said the mourner mechanically, without removing her gaze.

"Well, then, you know your grandmother left you thirty thousand dollars. Well, your father owes debts amounting to twenty-five thousand dollars, and is in danger of an execution or a prison every day. You would willingly give him your fortune to pay his debts with, we know; but, unfortunately, you cannot do it, because you are not of age. Neither can your father appropriate it, of course. But if you were to marry, then your husband would be in legal possession of that property, and could dispose of it. Now, Major Cabell has bought up your father's notes to the amount of eighteen thousand dollars, using all his available funds for the purpose of saving him from great distress, and in the expectation of marrying *you*, his daughter, and obtaining your little fortune, which would replenish his coffers again. Now, Zuleime, Major Cabell is himself pressed for money. He would not, of course, come down upon your father with an execution, but he will be compelled to sell those notes again for whatever he can get for them; and then, of course, the purchaser—some Jew or broker—would have no such scruples, but would levy on all the personal property of his debtor, and most likely throw him into prison, where he might languish for years—where he might die. Zuleime, you will not suffer this, if you can prevent it, will you? Speak to me, my love. I do not believe you understand me now. Why don't you answer me, Zuleime?"

"I—I don't know. Yes, I do. It was about a—about a—about somebody's going to prison. Was it the murderer? Alas! that will not bring him back; neither do I wish it—

not even *I*, who loved him so! I would not make anybody suffer, for the world. Oh, no!"

The beauty looked at the pale girl in deep perplexity a moment, and then said, "Zuleime, your father is suffering! Let's see if that will rouse you."

"My father? Oh, no, he mustn't. Tell him not to mind it. *I* do not much, now. I know he is at rest, and we shall be soon. Tell him not to mind it."

"Zuleime, awake! arouse yourself! Your father is in *danger*, I tell you!"

"In danger? in danger? Tell me about it."

"Listen to me, then. Rouse your mind, and fix it upon what I am going to tell you about your father's peril!"

And the lady took her hands and looked into her eyes, watching their expression, and bringing back her wandering ideas every time they showed the least sign of flying, and rousing up her flagging intellect every time it betrayed a disposition to sink, and so repeated the whole history of the difficulty over again. But the distracted mind of the poor girl was scarcely able to follow the painstaking narrator through the facts of the case. Passing her hand once or twice across her brow, she said, "What! what is it you say about father, and prisons, and Major Cabell? I—I am afraid my memory isn't as good as it used to be; please tell me over again."

The beauty, with a shrug of her shoulders, reiterated the story, placing it in the fewest, simplest, and most direct words she could find. But the stricken girl only looked sorely distressed and perplexed, and said plaintively, "Please forgive me, and tell me what it is that threatens father."

"An execution that will sweep off all the furniture from the house, and all the negroes from the plantation; parting husbands and wives, and parents and children, and brothers and sisters, among those poor, faithful creatures who love you so well; and, for your father's person, a jail, where he may be for years, or until he dies."

"Oh, pray don't talk to me any more; my head is so wild, so wandering, *it wants to go back to something*," said the poor thing, pressing her temples, and strongly attracted to her one great woe.

"But your father?"

"Yes! Oh, only tell me what you want me to do!"

"To marry Major Cabell, who will then have the disposal of your fortune, and can cover those notes and save your father."

"But—oh, yes! Now I remember. Father said there was no necessity; I needn't do it," said the girl, pressing her finger hard upon the centre of her forehead, and looking keen and old with the mental effort to bring memory, attention, and understanding, to bear upon the subject. "Yes, yes, yes; he said I should weep in peace."

"Yes; your poor old father loves you better than himself; and he said that, sooner than you should marry a man you did not love, he would die in jail."

"Did he? My dear good father! Oh, yes! now I think of it, it *was* something like that, sure enough. Only my head is *so* queer. He must not go to jail—oh, never!"

"He *must*, unless you marry Major Cabell and save him."

"Well, I can marry Major Cabell—it don't matter much; do you think it does? Spirits up in heaven know *nothing* of what is going on on earth, or they know *all* about it, and either is better than our deceptive half-knowledge. If spirits know anything, they will know *our* spirit. Dear Frank will know—will know my spirit; nay, he does. I feel sure of it at this moment. I will marry Major Cabell."

"But, Zuleime, if your father thinks you dislike Major Cabell, he will not permit you to marry him."

"But I don't dislike Major Cabell; I don't dislike anyone; I could not now. It seems to me that I feel sorry for everyone; I pity everyone. Everyone has so much trouble, mamma. Mamma, I feel sorry for *you*. I do not know how it is, but I *do* feel *very* sorry for you. Have you any trouble? You must have. Well, let God do as He pleases with you, because He knows best. Besides, it is only for a little while, and it will all come right. Kiss me, mamma. I don't think I loved you well enough when you first came here a stranger. Never mind, I will try to love you more in the future."

Georgia let the poor girl kiss her, and then arose and made an excuse to go. Zuleime was weakening all her purposes, and she was obliged to escape as people fly sometimes from a sermon.

"Please send Kate to me, mamma," said Zuleime.

And very soon Catherine entered.

"Dear Kate, please come and comb and curl my hair, and

put on my crimson dress, and make me decent and pretty to go down into the parlour to see Cousin Charles. It don't matter, you know, Kate. Frank knows all about it; he thinks so, too; because he sees my heart is breaking all the faster for it, and that I shall the sooner be with him. You see, Kate, it is the heartstrings that hold the soul down to the body; and when they snap, there! it is off—it is gone like a balloon: when the cord is cut, it ascends to heaven! I feel like that sometimes, as if only one little thread kept my soul down; and if it were to snap, I could go."

Catherine looked at the mourner in deep trouble; then she began to take down her hair and comb its long sable tresses out, because she knew that in itself to be a soothing process; and she stood and combed and brushed it a long time, and then put it up, and bathed her face and hands.

"Now, my crimson dress," said Zuleime quietly.

Catherine sat down by her side, and, embracing her affectionately, said, "Dear Zuleime, you are not quite well enough to go down into the parlour; and, besides, Major Cabell is not here. He is gone with some gentlemen upon the mountain to shoot birds."

Zuleime sat silent for a long time, enveloped by Catherine's arms and leaning upon her shoulder. At last Kate whispered, "Dear Zuleime, confide in me and relieve your overburdened bosom. A secret is so hard to keep alone in a sorrowful breast; lay yours on my heart, Zuleime, and it shall be safer there than my own life. Tell me—what tie is it that binds you to Frank?"

"Hush! oh, hush!"

"Tell me, darling; you know it is not from curiosity I ask—it is that I wish you to relieve your heart."

"Hush! I promised him not to tell."

"Death absolves you from that promise. A painful secret is very hard to keep alone. I know it, dearest; for *I*, too, have a secret. Now, will you trust me?"

"Hush! hush! It was his last request; I must comply with it!" said the girl, with wild eyes.

Catherine knelt down before her, clasped her arms around her, and, partly to win her confidence and partly to draw her mind from dwelling upon the woe that was crazing her, said, "Zuleime, look at me. I am going to tell you my secret, that which it will pain and humble my heart to tell—that

which it makes my cheek burn now only to think of! Zuleime, I love a man who never sought, and who would despise my love, and with whom it is for ever and for ever impossible that I should marry. Yet I love him so much—so much that my heart is ready to burst with its powerless longing to do him some good. Zuleime, I would give him myself—nay, never mind my cheek burning, I will speak in spite of its protest—or any dearest faculty or possession of mine, if it only could increase his happiness. Zuleime, there is a richness and fulness of joy in sacrificing one's self for one we love that passes all understanding."

"I know there is," breathed the mourner, looking down in her face seriously.

"That is the joy that I long for. And, oh! believe me, I would sacrifice myself or any possession or faculty I have, if it would only add to his happiness or power. Eyesight is a precious treasure, is it not? If I could give mine to him, and endow him with perfect vision down to deep old age, I would consent to be dark for ever. The power of speech is a great gift; if, by the loss of mine, I could endow him with irresistible eloquence, I would be dumb for ever. He thinks, Zuleime, that I have talent; and sometimes *I* think—but I don't know, either. Anyhow, if by yielding *all* mine I could add a mite to the treasures of his intellect, I would be willing to be a fool for life. In a word—if, by abdicating all my being, I could add to the largeness of his life, I would glow with joy to do it."

"Do not love him so—he will die if you do! *I know it!* Frank died!"

"And yet, Zuleime, it is not that I wish to *lose* my being, but to *add* to it. I do not know why it is, but I feel—not like an individual, independent existence, but like the compliment of that other existence, a half life—not full and complete of itself, but waiting to be joined to the other half."

"He will love you; he will find you out," said Zuleime; and her words, and tone, and look thrilled like a prophecy to the heart of Catherine, but she shook her head gravely and answered—

"Never, Zuleime! It would be a sin even to hope it. But, Zuleime, I have laid my secret on your heart—*now* will you confide in me?"

"O Kate! I would do it, I *wish* to do it, but I promised him!"

"Dear Zuleime, when he required that of you, he did not think what might, what has happened. You must tell me, Zuleime; for if you have not some one with whom you can talk freely, you—*I fear for you.* You cannot bear your burden alone—few human beings can! Tell me, darling?"

"O Kate! it was the last thing he asked me! I must comply with his wish!"

"Zuleime, I am about to cast away all reserve; I am about to tell you the name of him I love so madly. It is Arthur Clifton, your cousin—your sister's betrothed! There, I have thrown open the very sanctuary of my heart to you; I have shown its secret sin and shame; now will you confide in me?"

"Dear Kate, dearest Kate, my own secrets without reserve, but not another's."

Catherine arose and took the seat by the mourner's side. Well would it have been for Zuleime in after-life, if she could now have made a confidant as well as friend of the excellent girl; but at least Catherine's efforts had not been all in vain. The mind of the mourner was a little more rational—her part in conversation not quite so *distrait*. Presently Zuleime said, "It is getting towards evening; Cousin Charles will be back to supper. Curl my hair, Kate, and put on my crimson dress. I *must* go down and spend the evening with them in the parlour; I must, Kate. It is for my dear father's sake. You do not know, Kate, else *you* would also advise it."

Catherine essayed to prevent her, but, finding her quite determined, yielded the point, and assisted her to dress. When her toilet was complete, she sat down again upon the sofa, and put her hand to her head in troubled thought. Then at last she spoke, saying, "Kate, I am afraid. It seems to me that—that my head has not been quite right; and—and my speech has not been quite to the point. Kate, I want you to tell me—can I trust myself to talk, do you think, or had I better not try this evening? They might think me crazy if I should not talk straight! But I am not—I am not crazy, only— Tell me how I am, and what I had better do, dear Kate?"

"Try to attend and be interested in what is going on,

dearest, and talk when occasion presents itself; and do not be afraid. Everyone will understand it is only nervousness, darling."

"You encourage me, Catherine," said the poor girl; "and now just give me your arm down stairs."

Kate complied with her request.

The parlour was empty when they entered, and Zuleime had an opportunity of settling herself in a large arm-chair and composing herself before anyone came in. Mr. Clifton, Major Cabell, and several other gentlemen returned from the shooting-excursion and entered the parlour together. Mr. Clifton looked surprised and pleased to see Zuleime, "clothed and in her right mind;" and Major Cabell seemed interested and curious. Zuleime arose, and supported herself by resting one hand upon the arm of the chair, while she received the greetings of her father's guests. And, thanks to the shadowing of the black lustrous curls, and the reflection of the crimson dress, none could see the wanness of her face. Mrs. Clifton and Miss Clifton entered soon after; and in the general conversation that ensued, poor Zuleime escaped particular notice. Once Major Cabell contrived, without drawing attention upon himself, to find his way to her side, and enter into conversation with her; and he was surprised, perplexed, nonplussed at the gentleness and almost tenderness of her manner. Before leaving her, he asked, "When can I have an interview with you, Zuleime?"

"Whenever you please, Cousin Charles," she answered gently.

At parting he pressed her hand, and, to his surprise, the pressure was softly returned; and he left her, thinking "the sex" more of a riddle than he ever thought it before.

The next day about noon, Major Cabell and Zuleime met in the saloon, and had an interview of nearly an hour's length.

When Zuleime left him and came out, she met her father in the hall. Taking his hands in hers, she looked up in his troubled face and said, "Dear father, you remember many weeks ago you asked me to fix the day when I should be married to Cousin Charles?"

"Never mind, never mind, my dear! That is all over now. You shall not be troubled, my love."

"Dear father, I have just told Cousin Charles that I will give him my hand on Tuesday fortnight," said Zuleime; and,

pressing both the old man's hands to her lips, she turned and left him standing there in speechless astonishment, while she went up stairs, and, throwing herself upon her knees by her bed, buried her face in the clothes, and breathed, "It won't be for long, Frank! O Frank! you *know* it won't be for long!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE YOUNG MOURNER.

THERE is no state of mind so calm as that of hopelessness, and therefore there is none so often mistaken for resignation. Zulcime's cheeks were pale and hollow, her eyes heavy and sunken, and surrounded by a dark, livid circle, and she had contracted an unconscious habit of pressing her hand tightly over her heart, while a look of pain passed over her brow. Yet, withal, she moved through the house very quietly, without a sigh or a tear—yea, even with a *smile* for whom she chanced to meet—a wan smile of tenderness, fellow-feeling. For the grief that had come to her own young heart had revealed to her the secret of a general sorrow, and awakened a deep human sympathy; yet perhaps it was a morbid excess of this feeling that made her see, in every-one she met, a fellow-sufferer. Her father misunderstood her serenity and her sweet smile; and his wife led him into that misunderstanding.

"It is a merciful provision of Heaven that young people of her tender age can feel no lasting grief. At first, over any misfortune they lament excessively; but it is very soon forgotten," said Georgia.

"Ah, yes! Charley Cabell said something like the same thing; and, indeed, it seems to be true," replied Mr. Clifton.

We are easily persuaded to believe that which we wish to credit; and so the old gentleman believed in the correctness of his wife's judgment, and in the reality of his daughter's peace.

Major Cabell was baffled and perplexed. Jealousy is "cruel as the grave," and so, also, is that base passion which often goes by the holy name of Love. It had been under the influence of both of these that Charles Cabell had sworn

to punish Zuleime severely for what he called her faithlessness; but, for the present at least, he was completely frustrated. There was nothing to complain of in her conduct to him. She was very kind and gentle—not with the gentleness of meekness and humility, but with that of a compassionate toleration—such as an angel might feel in looking down upon a determined sinner; seeing his moral insanity, and foreseeing his consequent wretchedness. Major Cabell had frequently heard of mourners who could not bear to hear the names of their beloved, lamented dead, spoken before them; and he thought to torture her bosom by frequently reverting to "that horrible massacre," and "poor Frank." But he could not add one pang to those she had already endured. Her sorrow was too deep to be probed, to be *touched* by a superficial hand like his. She could bear to listen and reply when he talked of her massacred love; for, like a stationary panorama of the past and the present, his life and death were ever before her mind. She could converse without new emotion of him over whose fate, in its deepest, darkest horrors, she was ever brooding. If any mourners cannot brook to hear the name of the lost mentioned in their presence, it is because they are already blessed with long seasons of forgetfulness, and shrink from the pain of remembrance. She had no such pang of sudden recollection to dread. His memory—her sorrow—was ever present with her.

Catherine watched her with deep and painful interest. She sought an opportunity, and once more had a serious conversation with her.

"Zuleime, *don't* marry under present circumstances. If, as you say, your father is in the power of Major Cabell, it is bad; but if you marry him to deliver your father, it will be worse, and will not eventuate in any good. And two wrongs never make a right, Zuleime. Do no wrong, dearest, but trust in God for deliverance," said Catherine earnestly.

"It seems to me that I am doing right. It will please Cousin Charles, and save father; and as for myself, it *can't* matter much, you know," replied the despairing girl. And to this view of the case she adhered, with all the tenacity of a morbid resolution.

A few days after this Catherine returned to her brother's cabin, wondering what new misfortune would, against her fixed determination, throw her back among the Cliftons.

Major Cabell had written to Richmond for his mother and sisters to come down and be present at his marriage; and one day, near the last of the week, the carriage of Mrs. Cabell rolled up to the door. Knowing nothing whatever of Zuleime's attachment to the young soldier, and consequent deep grief at his fate, they were very much shocked to see her looking so ill, but quietly ascribed it to fatigue and anxiety in nursing Carolyn; and Mrs. Cabell was emphatic in demonstrations of motherly kindness, which the gentle girl acknowledged with grateful smiles, and by such attentions as she had the power to bestow. The city ladies had made a short stay that day, and were but little wearied; so that, after a little slumber, and the refreshment of the bath and of tea, they felt well enough to spend the evening in the parlour.

The family were all around the evening fire, when Mrs. Cabell and her daughters entered.

Major Cabell, who was as usual sitting by Zuleime, with his arm over the back of her chair in a property-holding sort of manner, arose, and, handing his mother to a seat, received from her hand a roll of papers.

"It is some new music, my son, for the dear girls. There are some beautiful songs of Moore's just published. Carolyn, love, I have thirsted to hear your sweet voice again. Will you sing?"

Miss Clifton's eyes filled with tears, and she turned away her head.

Zuleime stole to her aunt's side, and, while seeming to examine the music, whispered, "Dear Aunt Cabell, Carolyn has entirely lost her voice!"

The lady was very much shocked to hear it, and grieved at her own unfortunate proposition, but durst not trust herself to reply, lest Carolyn should hear and understand the subject of their conversation.

Major Cabell, who was turning over the music, suddenly had his gaze fixed by one particular piece. His eyes lighted up with a peculiar satisfaction, and, turning to Zuleime, he said, "My own, you can read music at sight—can you not?"

"Yes," replied the girl.

"And you can sing and play at sight—can you not?"

"Yes, if it is not too difficult."

"Is this difficult?" he asked, holding a page out to her.

"No, that is very simple," said Zuleime, looking entirely at the music, not at the words.

"It *is* a ballad of Thomas Moore's. I wish you to sing it for us. Will you?"

"Certainly."

"Come, then," he said, and took her hand, and led her to the piano. He seated her, and laid the song before her, saying to himself, "If she can *sing that* through without emotion—ay, or *with* emotion—if she can get through it at all, she can do or suffer anything! She is a heroine."

Zuleime was reading over the words, preparatory to singing them.

And he was watching her intently. But she read through the song, turning the leaves calmly, her pale cheek never changing its hue; then she restored the first page to its place before her, and began to play the prelude. The ladies and old Mr. Clifton drew near, and gathered around her. Then her voice arose, soft, clear, and plaintive, but unfaltering as her cheek remained unchanging—though her father trembled for her as the words of the song fell on his ear. That song was "The Broken Heart," by Thomas Moore. Zuleime sang—

> She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps,
> And lovers around her are sighing,
> But coldly she turns from their gaze and weeps,
> For her heart in his grave is lying.
> She sings the wild songs of her dear native plains,
> Every note which he loved awaking:
> Ah! how little they think, who delight in her strains,
> How the heart of the minstrel is breaking.

Her voice faltered—she paused.

"Come! no miserable, maudlin, mawkish self-pity, I beseech you!" whispered Major Cabell, stooping to her ear.

Whether Mr. Clifton heard the cruel whisper, or whether he only saw her slight agitation, is uncertain; but he drew near and stood by her side. She recovered, and continued—

> He had lived for his love, for his country he died,
> They were all that to life—

She paused again—again essayed to sing—her voice, quavering, sunk into silence like the rudely-swept strings of the harpsichord; the greyness of death crept over her countenance, and she fell back into the arms of her father, who angrily exclaimed, "Charles, you are a brute! a demon! to

ask her to sing that song! Zuleime! Zuleime, my darling! speak to me!"

He sat down on the sofa, holding her in his arms. The ladies drew around with fans, with cold water, with harts-horn; but she recovered very soon, and sat up, and declined going upstairs to bed, and thanked them all for their care, gently begging them not to take so much trouble on her account.

"This is all very strange, madam," said Mrs. Cabell aside to Mrs. Clifton.

"Zuleime is so nervous and sensitive ever since Carolyn's illness, that the news of that massacre, and the death of her old playmate and companion, has quite overwhelmed her. I suppose this music awoke her sensibilities," said Georgia composedly.

If Mrs. Cabell had any suspicion of the truth, she was too well-bred to express it then and there; and the matter ended for the moment.

But after this evening, Zuleime was never the same. Her fortitude seemed entirely to have given away; her calmness was utterly broken up. A strange, wild terror and incertitude had come upon her.

The next day Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain came over to call on the visitors. Nevertheless, in the course of the call, Major Cabell found the opportunity he sought of taking Zuleime to task for what he called her miserable weakness.

"You are unfaithful, false at heart—you cherish the image of this young man secretly, while you pretend to be true to me! Pah! Well! why don't you answer me? Have you anything to say?"

"Cousin Charles, does not the grave sanctify any affection? Is it a crime to remember a dead friend?"

"It is a miserable, drivelling weakness—a maudlin, mawkish, puling piece of unfaithfulness to duty—and leads you into the exhibition of such scenes as that of last night! Such whining, whimpering, contemptible *self-pity!* I protest you are the most false-hearted and selfish woman I ever met with in my life. It is *your own* griefs, and regrets, and reverses that occupy you all the time; and now, instead of listening to me, and replying, you are falling away into thought again! Come! answer me, now! Was it not self-pity that caused you to faint during the singing of that

à propos song, which, by the way, I gave you as an ordeal? Come, say! Wasn't it self-pity?"

"*No, nor was it the song.* If I pitied myself, should I not pity *you* as much? It is not such a happy fate, Cousin Charles, to marry a grief-stricken girl like me, I know."

"No! If I calculate upon your continued indulgence of that grief, which I do not! No! Trust me, on the part of my wife there must and shall be no such exhibitions of feeling as that of last night."

"I do not know why you wish to marry me!" she broke forth, with strange wildness. "You do not love me! Perhaps you hate me, and marriage will give you the same power to work out your hate as it would to act out your love! Yes! I do suppose that is really the key to the riddle!"

"Perhaps it is," he answered sarcastically.

"One thing I beg of you," she said; "while we stay here, in my father's presence, try to use me kindly, to spare his feelings; he is an old man. Reserve your vengeance until I am your wife, until we get to Richmond, when you will have full power, and ample time and space to work your will."

While she spoke so wildly, she pressed and rubbed her hand spasmodically against her heart; and her pale brow was darkened, and her intense black eyes strained and sharpened as by mental and physical pain. She gasped for breath, and began again.

"I do not know, I am sure—I cannot tell—whether, after all, we will ever mar—"

What she was about to say was cut short by the entrance of Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain, who came in, with her shawl and bonnet on, to take leave of Zuleime and Major Cabell, and invite them to join the rest of the family in coming to dine and spend the evening at Hardbargain the next day. Major Cabell accepted the invitation for himself and Zuleime, and the lady took her departure.

The next day was Saturday. The family set out on their visit at an early hour of the day, as is the social custom of country neighbours. Old Mr. Clifton, his wife, and his eldest daughter rode in his carry-all. Mrs. Cabell and her three daughters went in that lady's carriage. Zuleime rode on horseback, attended by Major Cabell.

It was a glorious Indian summer day, when the splendour of the autumnal sunlight would be too dazzling but for the

soft, warm mist spread veil-like over it. At another time, Zuleime, true worshipper of nature, might have drawn deep draughts of pleasure from the beauty of the scene; but now the gorgeous magnificence of the forests, in their many-coloured foliage—the misty-mountain steeps softening the glory—the fine transparent neutral tint of the heavens, leading the eye and mind up through infinite heights of ether—the glowing clouds reposing along the horizon—all were lost upon her.

An hour's ride by the carriage-road brought the party to Hardbargain.

Mrs. Clifton received them with her usual quiet cordiality. There was something very composing in that calm, kind, self-possessed woman's manner; there was something very sedative also in the air of her home. In her company and in her house the restless became quiet, the anxious easy, the desponding cheerful—even the despairing mourners over some great heart-wreck grew languidly aware of how much good was left them in the comforts of daily domestic life, and the amenities of social intercourse.

She was strikingly like her son. One was inclined to wonder how they, so nearly identical in features and complexion, should differ so widely in many points of character and sentiment, and had to remember that all in which he did not resemble her was inherited from the Cliftons. Kate felt the likeness keenly; and when the lady turned those quiet, brilliant eyes upon her, her heart thrilled to the glance with strange pain and pleasure; and when once or twice—for the lady was never very demonstrative in her affection—she had quietly drawn the maiden to her bosom, it was such a heart-feeding comfort that Kate felt there would be no possibility of forgetting Archer Clifton while thrown into daily intercourse with his mother. Once, when Mrs. Clifton had looked tenderly into her eyes, and drawn and pressed her closely against her breast, the girl, lost for an instant, had thrown her arms around the lady, and buried her face in her bosom; and for some time after that, terrified at her own impulse, she had been as shy of the mother as she could have been of the son. Kate had kept away from Hardbargain for many weeks; but to-day, when the party from White Cliffs had arrived, Mrs. Clifton sent

for her, with the message that her friend Zuleime had come. That was no sufficient lure to the resolute girl, however, who had once for all determined that nothing but the absolute necessities of others should draw her again into the dangerous association of the Cliftons. She returned thanks to the lady, declining the visit. Mrs. Clifton was disappointed in missing the society of her young favourite for that day; yet the time passed very pleasantly notwithstanding. There is scarcely any such thing as a stiff dinner-party in the country; and such a thing was impossible at Hardbargain. The ladies had all brought their "parlour-work"—fine netting, knotting, knitting, or sewing; and they worked and conversed in a quiet, pleasant way, while the gentlemen mingled in their conversation, or talked with each other upon the two reigning subjects of country discussion—agriculture and politics—or sauntered out upon the lawn to enjoy the fine autumnal weather until dinner; after which, the ladies in the cozy parlour lounged a little more lazily, and grew a great deal more kindly in their interchange of thought and sentiment, and the gentlemen enjoyed a promenade on the piazza, and the stolen luxury of their cigars.

After an early tea, the party took leave. They returned in the same manner in which they had come—Zuleime on horseback, escorted by Major Cabell; the others in carriages. Even the soothing influence of Mrs. Clifton's home and society had almost failed to quiet the miserable girl. Her manner, all day long, had been erratic in the extreme—now depressed into gloom, sunken nearly to the depth of stupidity—now full of "starts and flows" as the crime-burdened Macbeth. As she rode home, in perfect silence, the evil eye of her companion watched her stealthily. Her cheek was pale and hollow, and her eye sunken and heavy; yet sometimes her eyes would lighten as with sudden terror, like those of a startled hare, and her cheek would flush and fade. The road was broad yet shadowy, from the meeting of the branches of the huge trees overhead; and so soon as the sun went down, it became too dusky to permit him to see the flickering and sinking of the fire in her eye and cheek, but he watched her closely, nevertheless. Suddenly he saw her sway to and fro in the saddle, like the reed blown by the wind; then, ere he

could spring to her aid, the reins dropped from her hands, and she fell from the horse, her foot catching in the stirrup. The well-trained palfrey stopped, and stood without so much as lifting a hoof. With a deep curse, Major Cabell threw himself from his steed, and raised her, disengaging her foot from the stirrup. He sat down on a bank, with her on his knees, and took off her hat, and began to feel her head, neck, and arms for injuries. It seemed impossible to tell whether or how she was hurt. The carriages were some yards behind, and concealed by a turn of the road. He dipped his hand in a run, at the foot of the bank, and sprinkled her face; and before the carriages arrived, she had opened her eyes, and sat up. She said that she was not hurt—that it was only a fainting-spell, such as she had had at the piano; but her voice was very weak, and her frame trembling, and her general manner frightened. She placed her hand against Major Cabell's chest, partly to assist herself in rising, partly to push him away, and stood alone upon her feet, until her father's carriage drew up; then she said she was tired, and wished to get in.

Old Mr. Clifton sent a glance of impotent rage at Major Cabell, as he lifted his child in—placing her in the vacant fourth seat—the other three being occupied by his wife, eldest daughter, and himself.

Zuleime sat next to her sister, and opposite Georgia; and the last-mentioned lady studied her *vis-à-vis* with as much interest, and with far more curiosity and comprehension than Major Cabell had exercised.

The girl sat perfectly still, and quite lost to all around her; but Georgia saw that it was the fearful stillness of self-restrained frenzy.

They reached home at last. Georgia was handed out first; she waited for Zuleime, who followed. She wished to draw the girl's arm within her own; but Zuleime, turning on her a dilated, strained, fiery gaze, fled past her into the house, and then the lady saw, with a shudder, that it was indeed the fires of incipient madness that kindled the lambent flame in the girl's eyes!

When they were all assembled in the parlour, around the evening fire, with books, and music, and light needlework, "Where is Zuleime?" asked her father.

"She has retired to her room, very much fatigued," replied his wife, and the subject dropped.

The next morning, when the family gathered around the breakfast-table, the youngest daughter was still missing.

"Where is Zuleime? Why doesn't Zuleime come? Carolyn, have you seen your sister this morning? How is she?" asked old Mr. Clifton.

Carolyn replied that she had not seen her since the preceding evening.

"Send some one, then, to her chamber, to see how she is, and whether she will join us at breakfast, or have anything sent up to her room. Or—stay! Carolyn, don't send; go yourself, my love, to your sister—it will be only kind."

Carolyn left the table, and went up stairs, and after an absence of fifteen or twenty minutes returned, and announced, with a pale cheek, that Zuleime's chamber had not been occupied during the night; that she herself was nowhere to be found in the house; and that no one of the servants had seen her since the evening before.

A dreadful suspicion instantly seized upon all who remembered her wild and moody looks and manners of the preceding few days; and they simultaneously arose from the table, and, with looks of alarm, dispersed in various directions in quest of the missing girl.

The house, kitchen, out-buildings, negro-quarters, garden, vineyard, orchard, the plantation and the woods were successively and vainly searched.

Messengers were despatched to Hardbargain and to the neighbouring plantations, with inquiries that proved fruitless.

Old Mr. Clifton ran up and down the house and grounds like one distracted.

At last, near night, traces were discovered of the lost one. Upon the edge of the stream, where the banks were soft and deep, small footprints were seen; and half-way down the bank her little slipper was found, with its toe deep in the mud, and the heel sticking up, as if lost there in the downward run of its owner; and from the branch of a sapling near a shred of her crimson dress fluttered, as if caught and torn off in the same swift descent.

Old Mr. Clifton walked down there, to see the spot; but he was *carried* back.

And before the next sun arose, Mrs. Georgia Clifton had her heart's first desire.

She was a widow.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONFESSION.

A RETROSPECT of several hours is necessary here. You will remember that, during the drive home from Hardbargain, Mrs. Georgia Clifton had watched Zuleime with much interest and curiosity, and with more perspicacity. When the unfortunate girl had sprung from the carriage, and fled up the steps into the house, Mrs. Clifton had followed her. Instead of going up into her chamber, she had passed directly through the hall, and gone out at the back door; Georgia having kept near her. There was the kitchen-garden at the back of the house, and then the vineyard, and then the orchard; through all these she successively passed, with the same wild, hurried gait, and entered the forest beyond, and descended into the deep glen, through which the mountain-stream roared. It was very difficult to follow the reckless steps of the fugitive down this rough declivity; and while cautiously descending, with the aid of projecting fragments of rock and smaller branches of trees and bushes, Georgia lost sight of the girl. When she reached the bottom of the gorge, through which the torrent raged and raved, Zuleime was nowhere to be seen.

The night was very dark; and though a few large, brilliant stars were to be seen directly overhead, yet, low from the horizon, heavy, black masses of clouds were slowly rolling up; and the wind moaned and died away at intervals, prophetic of the winter's storm. The single, large stars overhead were reflected in the stream, not clearly and calmly, but plunging and leaping with the wild water. The banks each side lay shrouded in gloom and mystery; rocks and trees indistinctly blended together in dark and sombre hues. The everlasting mountains stood around, vast, vague, and awful. The seven white peaks gleamed up in the back ground, like the ghostly genii of the scene. A shiver of superstitious fear shook the frame of Georgia; and she had

turned to retrace her steps home, when a sound between a moan and a suffocating sob arrested her purpose. She crept towards the spot whence the sound proceeded; and there, half hidden in the deep gloom of overhanging willows, she dimly discerned the figure of the unhappy girl, bending over the stream, and gazing intently upon the water, where the reflection of the stars leaped and plunged with the waves. As if communing with herself, she murmured, "There is peace there! There is peace there!" Then her form bent lower, and her gaze grew more earnest and intense, as though body, soul, and spirit were irresistibly fascinated, drawn down by the glamour of the water; and "There is peace, deep peace there!" she muttered. How stormy must have been the soul that saw deep peace in the raging torrent! Her eyes shone in the dusk with a bright, phosphoric light; and still pouring their splendour upon the dark, wild water, she murmured, "Peace, deep peace!" Suddenly, up flew her arms, and she sprang forward.

The ready hand of Georgia caught her shoulder and pulled her back, exclaiming, "Mad girl! what are you about to do?"

Zuleime sprang round with her eyes all wide and ablaze, like one suddenly waking up from a terrible dream, and not yet quite brought to consciousness. Georgia drew her away from the dangerous proximity of the torrent. Zuleime threw her hands to her head with sudden recollection and intensity of consciousness, and sank down at the feet of the lady, clasping her knees, and exclaiming, "Oh, you don't know what you have done! Why did you pluck me back? There was peace there! The only peace left for me!"

"You are frantic, miserable girl! What is the meaning of this madness?" asked Georgia in a stern, curt tone. Convulsive sobs, shaking as with a tempest the form of the girl, alone answered her.

"What will your father—what will your intended husband think of this? Say! Speak! What do you suppose Major Cabell—"

"Oh, do not speak of him!" gasped the girl.

"Will you tell me what you mean by this conduct?" sneered Georgia.

"Mamma," commenced Zuleime, but her voice broke down.

"Zuleime! Come! Get up and come home!"

"Oh, no, no, no! Not home! Never home again!"

"Once more, what am I to think of this frantic behaviour?"

"Mamma!"

"Don't call me mamma, if you please! It may not be pleasant or politic to acknowledge that tender relationship. But explain yourself, lest I bring you to those who will demand the explanation with less forbearance!"

"Mercy! mercy! I will tell you anything, everything! Only do not kill my father with the story!"

"Speak, then!"

"Lady—"

"Well!"

But some feeling stronger than fear gripped her heart and stopped her speach.

"Zuleime, how long will you try my patience?"

"Madam—"

Another hesitation.

"*What*, then?"

"I have been—a wife! I am—a widow! I am fated to be—"

"Well," asked Georgia in a deep-drawn breath between her teeth, "you are fated to be—"

"*A mother!*" breathed the girl in a dying voice, covering her face with both hands, and sinking lower on the ground.

There was a long, deep pause, filled up with the roar of the torrent and the moan of the rising wind. Suddenly up sprang Zuleime, with fire in her eyes, and made a dash towards the water. The swift arm of Georgia caught and dragged her back. No word was spoken yet. The impulse of frenzy passed off, and Zuleime sank into her old posture.

"Get up!" at last said Georgia, half-shaking, half-putting the girl upon her feet. "Get up and come with me!"

And she drew her to a fragment of rock, at a safer distance, pushed her down on the seat, and dropped herself by her side.

"Now, tell me of this," she commanded in a hard, curt tone. "You were married?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Who was your husband?"

"Ah, you know! You *must* know! He who died in yonder field of blood, under the tomahawk of the Shoshonowa. I am very wretched!"

"Stay! is this true—about the marriage, I mean?"

"True as God's Word!"

"Certainly the marriage was not legal without your father's consent, and would have been annulled by him; but now he will permit his consent to be supposed. Let's see! the widow of an army officer entitled to his half-pay, perhaps—I do not know—perhaps to a pension, too, as he died in the field of battle. Zuleime, upon the whole, I think that you were rash to attempt suicide. Your position and prospects are not so bad. If Major Cabell is anxious to possess you, now that he supposes you to be a maudlin, love-sick girl, grieving yourself to death over the grave of your lover, he will be quite as willing to marry you a year hence, when he knows you to be the widow of Captain Fairfax; for that, I understand, was his rank when he fell. Come, girl, live! Acknowledge your marriage, like a truthful woman; bring your child into God's world like a Christian woman; and after a sufficient time has elapsed, marry Major Cabell, like a sensible woman! For I do assure you that the gallant major is sufficiently enamoured of your young beauty to wait that length of time, if compelled to do so."

"Ah, yes! I think he is enamoured of me as the Shoshonowa was of poor Frank's hair!" bitterly said the girl.

"This marriage must be announced at once! Who performed the ceremony?"

"Old Mr. Saunders, the Baptist preacher."

"What! He who was found dead in his bed?"

"Yes, yes; it was he!"

"Pity, for your sake, that he is dead! But you, doubtless, had some confidant, some witness—Kate Kavanagh, perhaps, or some one else? Say! speak! There was some witness to your marriage, who can be produced to prove it?"

"No; there was none! It was so sudden!"

"None!—no proof of your marriage? Yet stop! stay! there is a chance yet, I believe; I do not know. You were married with a licence, of course?"

"Yes, yes!"

"The county clerk who issued it will probably remember

the occurrence. That will be something in your favour, though, alas! only imperfect circumstantial evidence; for the mere taking out of a licence is no conclusive proof of a marriage."

"Ah, great or small, as proof it is of no avail. The licence was procured *blank*, for Carolyn and Archer, because he had forgotten her full name, and it was afterwards filled out with our names."

"No matter; you were married with it. And now I remember a saving thing! The clergyman who married you of course affixed his certificate of marriage to the licence, and gave it to you. Where is it? All depends now upon that. Where is it?"

"I do not know! I never saw it! If the parson gave one, probably Frank took charge of it!"

Again a pause fell, and the noises of the wind and waters arose in gloomy concert. At last Georgia spoke—

"Miserable girl! and so you have no proof whatever of this *asserted* marriage?"

"None! none! But, oh! what does that matter after all? God knows that we loved, and *were* married, as He knows that we will soon be re-united!"

"Wretched girl! who will credit the story?"

"No one in the world, perhaps! But, ah! what odds? Could the proving of my marriage bring *him* back to life, or give my father happiness?"

"Most wretched girl! You seem quite lost to the shame you have brought upon yourself, the dishonour you have brought upon your family!"

"Ah, go on! You cannot say anything to me so bitter as my heart is saying all the time!"

"Your father! your old, grey-haired father! to bring him to shame in his old age! Can he survive the knowledge of your fall?"

"I know he cannot! I know it! Oh, oh!"

"Carolyn, too! To destroy all her prospects in life! Who will ever wed the sister of a supposed—"

"Ah, spare me that! Why did you pluck me back! the river would have covered all!"

"Because I did not know or dream your folly! Zuleime, your father, who could bear your death, could never survive your disgrace"

"O God, I feel it!"

"Zuleime—*you must die!*"

A pause, when, but for the roar of the torrent and the howl of the wind, their very hearts might have been heard slowly beating.

"Zuleime, you must not live to bring shame upon us! You must die!"

"Ah! Why did you hinder me when it would not have been a crime?"

"What mean you?"

"I was mad then! I knew not what I did! God would not have charged me with my death! I am sane now—sane, though most wretched!"

"Zuleime, you must die! not in reality, but in appearance. It must be believed that you are dead—dead by your own act, as you intended; and I will provide for your escape and your future support."

"Alas! lady, what is it you advise me to do? Deceive my poor father so cruelly, and never, never undeceive him again? and never, never see him again?"

"Lost girl! If I had not saved you an hour ago, would you have been alive to ask the question?"

"Ah, no! But, oh, my father! Who will comfort him?"

"Who would have comforted him had you effected your purpose this hour? What would comfort him for your degradation? Foolish girl, that will console him for your supposed death, which never could console him for your fall—*time*. Besides, if you are supposed to be dead, it will not only save us all from shame, but your father will be your heir, and can appropriate that thirty thousand dollars to the payment of his debts. Zuleime, it seems to me you owe us all this sacrifice."

"I—I am very weak and miserable. I—I scarcely know right from wrong. Do what you please with me, only console my father!"

"And at any rate, girl, this plan is far better than the self-destruction you meditated awhile ago. By this plan, you will be able to save your child."

"Ah! to what end? To be as miserable as its mother?"

"Zuleime, time presses. To-night you must journey to L——, and take the stage thence to Richmond. I have a negro here on whose secrecy I can depend; he shall take

two horses from the stable and convey you to L—— in time to meet the Richmond stage. I will give you a letter that you must deliver to its address as soon as you reach the city. Get up now and come with me," said Georgia, taking her hand to assist her in rising.

The unhappy girl mechanically yielded herself to the guidance of "the dark ladie," and they ascended the glen.

Retracing their steps through forest, field, orchard, vineyard, and garden, they reached the house, and entered by the back door. The hall was deserted; the family being at that hour gathered around their parlour fire, and the servants being at supper.

"Zuleime, go quietly up into your chamber and get ready, while I go down and find the man I spoke of," said Georgia.

Zuleime mechanically obeyed. The next hour, while her father, and sister, and friends were enjoying their happy evening re-union in the warm, bright parlour, the wretched Zuleime, through the dark night and the howling wind, commenced her journey. Of what followed the discovery of her loss, you are already possessed.

CHAPTER XX.

A DOMESTIC SCENE.

Nearly twelve months have passed since the death of Mr. Clifton. It is October, the most glorious month in the year, when the gorgeous beauty of nature more than satisfies—when it enraptures the soul.

I shall introduce you into a chamber whose three large windows look out upon the scene of glorious magnificence only to be found when mountains, vales, and forests wear their gorgeous autumn livery. It is a very large apartment, so long and lofty that the great four-post bedstead, standing with its head against the upper end, is not in the way. At the lower end of the room there is an old-fashioned fireplace, where an oak fire is burning; the floor is covered with an ingrain carpet of warm, rich hues; the bedstead, lounge, and cushioned chairs are clothed with dark bright chintz; the windows are curtained with orange-coloured damask,

which give a mellow, autumnal tone to the atmosphere of the room; the curtains are festooned back, to admit the sunshine and the glorious view without.

The lounge is drawn up to the left of the fireplace, and Carolyn Clifton, in deep mourning, reclines upon it: she is very much changed since we saw her last. There is scarcely a trace of her disease left—only a few pits scattered thinly over the lower part of the chin and throat. But she is very, very fragile; and her thin white face is almost spectral, in contrast with her black dress. Her fair hair has grown out richer, sunnier in hue than before; it is just long enough to turn in natural, smooth ringlets, that reach to her throat—and she wears it so; and those bright curls soften and shade the pearly whiteness of her cheek: the expression of her countenance has changed also—it wears a subdued, almost patient air of suffering. She is beautiful, although, now that the roundness and bloom of her cheek are gone, she does not think so. She is beautiful, as she lies there contemplating, with remorseful tenderness, a miniature that she has drawn from her bosom.

In the cushion-chair on the right of the fireplace sits Catherine Kavanagh. She has also changed within the year. Her form is fuller, rounder, more womanly; her grave, almost stern features, have softened into gentleness; her voice is softer and deeper—its tones, indeed, are very beautiful, and modulated with every shade of feeling. She wears her hair in the same old style, parted over the forehead, rippling down in dark, bright wavelets around her cheeks, and carried behind, and woven with the back hair into a large plait, and then rolled round and round into a succession of rings—a rich, dark, burnished mass of hair—

> Golden where the sunlight played;
> But where the tendrils sought the shade,
> Dark, but very beautiful.

Her dress of dark brown stuff, with the little white throat-ruffle and the black silk apron, is not very becoming to her; but she thinks too little of her personal appearance to care for any quality in her clothing beyond neatness and comfort. She is knitting very leisurely, stopping occasionally to measure the stocking she is engaged upon with the finished one which lies upon her lap. Kate is silent and thoughtful. All her life, up to this date, has been passed in the ministry to

sorrow—yes, to all sorts of sorrow: to the suffering arising from vice, to the despair caused by evil passions, to common illness, to pestilence forsaken of all but her, to death! Yes, but little turned of sixteen years of age, and to all these forms of human misery had she been—not a ministering angel, but a ministering child and woman: that ministry of sorrow had filled up all her years, from early childhood to this hour. Now her days were passed in soothing and cheering the solitude and depression of her invalid companion. And Kate was grave and thoughtful, because she was tempted to think that life was made up of nothing else but trouble; her hope in happiness beyond her experience was faint, her faith was dim—and no wonder. It seemed time she saw some one else's happiness, if not her own. It was hard to pour the words of faith, hope, and cheerfulness into the ear of another, when the fountain in her own heart was failing—it was only a temporary darkening and failing of the spirit. A silent, earnest prayer, and all was clear and strong again. The room was provocative of thought, if not of pensiveness—it was so still, and warm, and mellow, between the fire and the golden sunshine coming softened through the curtains. And both girls were silent, while Kate leisurely plied her knitting-needles, and Carolyn contemplated the miniature. At last Miss Clifton spoke—

"Catherine, look upon that face; study it. Should you believe, now, that the owner of that beautiful face could be unrelenting, unforgiving?" and she passed the miniature to her companion. Kate received it—glanced at it. It was a faithful likeness of Archer Clifton; and those features, so long unseen and now suddenly revealed, thrilled with such electric power to the heart of the girl that, after the first recognising glance, she instantly returned it; and though her heart had paused in its pulsations, and now throbbed thick and fast, she answered calmly—

"He is not unrelenting or unforgiving, Miss Clifton."

"Oh, he is! he is! It has been fifteen months since we parted in anger, and no word or sign from him yet. O Kate! what do you think of it?"

"I think he truly loves you, Miss Carolyn."

"Oh! he did—he did; but I scorned and insulted him, and it is past!

"There is no past tense to real love, lady."

"Ah, Catherine, you speak of what you have had no experience in. My scorn killed his love."

"Real love is immortal, lady; it cannot be killed."

"Ah, child, you speak without knowledge."

"Without experimental knowledge, Miss Clifton; and all the highest truths we have are obtained without experimental knowledge. I know that true affection is undying, by the same light that, without the Bible, shows me that God exists—that He made all souls, and that all souls are immortal. It is one of the 'self-evident' truths. Ah, Miss Clifton, true affection can no more be killed by scorn than an angel could be overcome by a demon—than heaven could be conquered by hell. In the contest between true affection and scorn, it is affection must conquer—scorn must yield. It must be so, lady—the heavens are pledged to it, the sovereignty of the right is involved in it; and when in such a contest affection fails, it is because it never was true. No, lady, true affection is never conquered. It is scorn that is conquered—it is scorn that has yielded now. You do not scorn him now, lady?"

"No; I would I could!"

"Then, in the death of your own scorn see the immortality of his love. He will come back to you—he will come back the first free moment that he has."

"Ah, Catherine, in all this fifteen months he has not written to me."

"You do not know that, Miss Carolyn. *I* believe that he has written to you, and that the letter has been lost. You know how irregular and uncertain the mail is from that distant frontier."

"Catherine, I have been thinking of writing to him. What is your opinion? What would you advise me to do?"

"Not for the world, lady; for, trust me, for every step of advance a woman makes, a man of high honour and fine sensibilities retreats."

Miss Clifton's brow flushed, and she made a gesture of impatience as she exclaimed, "Then why—why, knowing that, does he not write?"

"Because, perhaps, his first letters miscarried, and he stopped under the supposition that you would not answer him; and then, lady, under all these circumstances, the stiff pen and the cold paper cannot convey all the burning words he would have to pour out at your feet. He will come!"

"He will come! Ah, in that very phrase is a knell deeper than all the rest! He will come; and what a spectre he will see in me! He cannot continue to love me! Impossible! impossible! He can never love such a faded and scarred ruin as I am."

"Dear Miss Clifton, I have told you so often that you are *not* a ruin! Your face is very lovely—indeed, it is—fair, and delicate, and pensive, and far more attractive to all good hearts than ever it was in its high bloom."

"Ah, but faded, faded, faded!" mournfully replied Carolyn.

"And then, dear lady, true affection is of the soul. It has been said that love is blind; it is not so. Love has divine eyes, and creates the beauty that it looks upon. He will love you the more for the calamity and sorrows that have fallen upon you. He will see a deeper beauty in your pensive face, and his love will make it real."

"Oh! impossible, I tell you! Impossible! The sight of me would shock him. He would turn away"

"Lady, do you love your cousin?"

"*Love him!* Ah, God!"

"Dear lady, if he had returned from the frontier with the loss of an arm, a leg, or an eye, or with the hideous scar of a sword-cut across cheek and brow, could *you* have turned from him revolted?"

"Oh, no, no! O Heaven, no! I should have done all I could to convince him that he was beautiful to me still, that I loved him the deeper for his misfortunes!"

"Then, dear lady, judge his noble heart by your own."

"Ah, but you said yourself just now, when advising me not to write, that men feel so differently from women."

"Yes, but not in tenderness—not in constancy!"

"There is the boy coming from the post-office, Catherine. It is strange, it is strange, but though I have been disappointed a hundred times, I still hope, and the coming of every mail makes my heart pause. Go, dear Catherine, and see what there is."

Kate rolled up her knitting, and dropped it into a little straw basket, and went below.

"Only one letter, an' the pos'-master say how it war for Miss Carolyn," said the boy below stairs.

A letter for her at last. Carolyn's heart stopped almost

to death, until Kate ran back up the stairs, entered the room, and placed the letter in her hands.

"It is from Richmond," she said in a disappointed tone, as she opened it—"from my Aunt Cabell," she added, and began to read it, while Kate resumed her knitting.

"I hope your friends are all well," said Catherine.

"Yes," replied Miss Clifton; and then a smile of amusement flitted over her face, and, still running her eye down the letter, she continued, "My Aunt Cabell writes me that my excellent stepdame, Mrs. Georgia Clifton, is now the reigning belle of Richmond—the most beautiful woman, the most charming musician, the most fascinating waltzer, and the most elegant equestrian in the city. She passes for a wealthy (!) young widow, and her credit is unlimited, and her debts and her extravagance, of course, unbounded. She occupies a whole suite of rooms in the most expensive hotel in the city, and entertains around her, both day and night, a host of adoring worshippers. She has cut her father—worthy man—dead! She is going to bring down a party of ladies and gentlemen to spend Christmas at her country-seat (!), White Cliffs. Now, what do you think of that, Catherine? Pray Heaven she may marry soon, and not wear our name long enough to scandalise it! Mrs. Cabell goes on to say that Mrs. Georgia cannot long play that game; that Archer Clifton must soon return, and take possession of his property, when it will be arrested. Alas! she does not know that Captain Clifton is as much under the dominion of that dangerous woman as it is possible to be. He will probably be proud to leave Mrs. Clifton in possession here as long as she finds it convenient or agreeable to stay. Now, what do you think of all this, Catherine?"

"Dear lady, I know that you feel very unpleasantly that all those gay city strangers should be coming down here at Christmas, to turn the quiet house into a hall of orgies; but I do not see how you can prevent it. You can elude it, though. You can go to Hardbargain, you know, and remain until Mrs. Georgia and her guests have departed again. I would do that."

"No, dear Catherine, there will be no necessity for that, either. My Aunt Cabell has anticipated my embarrassment, and proposed a plan. My aunt and all her family are coming down here to spend the months of October and November,

while their city mansion is undergoing repairs—painting, papering, and so on; and she proposes that I shall return with her in December, and pass the winter in Richmond."

"And will you go?"

"I do not know. But, Kate, dear, you have comforted me so much, and aunt's account of Mrs. Georgia's city airs has diverted me so much, that I think I have spirits for a ride. Go, order the horses, and tell Dandy to be ready to attend us. We will go up to Hardbargain and take tea with Aunt Clifton, and amuse her with this letter!"

Mrs. Cabell and her daughters, attended by Major Cabell, arrived in due time, and were received with great pleasure by their orphaned relative; and Catherine, now that she was no longer necessary to the cheerfulness of Miss Clifton, took leave and returned to her brother's cot. Life in the mansion, and life in the hut, like day and night, about equally divided the girl's experience—a strange lot, to be ever alternating between luxury and refinement, and poverty and coarseness; and though it was a wonderfully strengthening discipline, Kate found the contrast so painful as to wish that life would change—in some way.

A month passed away, during which she heard nothing whatever from White Cliffs. She was therefore in total ignorance of what was going on there, until, one cold morning that had succeeded a snow-stormy night, while she was shovelling away the snow in front of the cottage-door, Dandy rode up and delivered her a note from Miss Clifton. The note ran thus:—

"DEAR CATHERINE,—I am going to leave for Richmond with Aunt Cabell to-morrow morning. Come over, dear girl, and let me take leave of you before I start. Come, my good, wise Catherine; for I want to consult you about a certain matter. Your friend, "CAROLYN."

Kate saddled her pony and set out, attended by Dandy. As soon as she arrived at White Cliffs, she was invited immediately up into Miss Clifton's room. She found the young lady surrounded with trunks and bandboxes, and busy with her maids packing. Carolyn dismissed her attendants, begged Kate to be seated, and sat down by her. After a few mutual

inquiries about health and so on, and a little introductory conversation, and some considerable hesitation, Miss Clifton said, "Catherine, I think, I hope that I have succeeded at last in emancipating myself from the degrading slavery of that old love-spell; at least, the dread sense of bereavement and desolation is deadened. . . . If I were to see him again, however, I do not know how it might be. . . . Perhaps, though, I shall never see him again. . . . Kate, I have had a proposal for marriage. . . . My cousin, Major Cabell. . . . It was at least generous in him, all things considered. . . . Family feeling, I suppose. . . . Kate, I think of accepting him. . . . We owe something to our position in society. . . . My Aunt Cabell has been talking to me about it for a month past."

Miss Clifton made this communication in a hesitating, disjointed manner; while Catherine looked and listened in grief and astonishment, feeling regret amounting almost to remorse that she had left her friend, enfeebled in mind and body, so long under the influence of a strong-w d, thoroughly worldly-minded woman; and she understood the instinct that had impelled the wavering girl to send for *her* to steady her; and then athwart these, her purest emotions, swept a dark, burning impulse, like the breath of hell. It was the whisper of the devil, and it said to her, "Agree with her, agree with her! Let her marry another if she wishes, and thus remove the greatest impediment that separates you from the love, the hope of Archer Clifton." Catherine stood for a moment horrified by the darkness of the temptation; but then summoning the whole strength of her soul, she inwardly exclaimed, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" and the devil fled from her.

"You do not answer me, Catherine. My dear girl, I have so much confidence in your rectitude of mind. Advise me."

"Dear Miss Clifton, never, as you value your whole life's peace and rectitude—*never*, for any purpose whatever, under any temptation whatever—consent to marry a man you do not love; *never*, as you hope for earthly content, as you trust in God, *never* put an insurmountable object between yourself and one you love! How criminal to become a wife, while you love another living man! How terrible to find out, when it is too late, that he loves you still! Perhaps from year to year to long for the — Lady, I have no words strong enough

to express to you all that I feel and fear on this subject. Grave faults sometimes follow little errors. I would fain gain your promise not to entertain any gentleman's suit until you have met again with Captain Clifton. You cannot have long to wait. He *must* return to settle up this estate; and legal business, if nothing else, must bring you together."

"Alas! alas, no! The affairs of this property will be settled by his attorney. Kate, I am very miserable!"

"Dear lady, I know it. Do not, when tempted by hopelessness, do that which you may regret all your life—that which may shut out the possibility of happiness for ever! I wish I could go to Richmond with you."

"Oh, I wish you could! I think that you could save me from danger, Kate."

"I think you want an honest friend near you, Miss Clifton; but one thing you can do—you can resolve not to form any matrimonial engagement until you have again met with Captain Clifton, and you can bind your resolution by a promise. Promise *me*, dear lady, by the interest I take in you, to hold yourself free from entanglements until you see your cousin."

"Kate! yes, I solemnly promise you, by all I hold sacred, that I will do as you advise in this matter; and, Kate, enfeebled as I am, or may become, in mind or body, I cannot break my pledged word. Good girl, you have saved me again! O Kate! Kate! do you think I don't know the full extent of your disinterestedness? O Kate! noble girl! God reward you!"

Catherine began to tremble so violently that Miss Clifton threw her arms around her, and pressed her to her bosom, whispering, "Never fear, dear girl, sweet girl! I will not breathe another word. I would as soon sacrilegiously snatch the veil from the sanctuary as breathe another word about it!"

When Catherine reached home in the afternoon, she found a message waiting her, from Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain. She went up immediately to the farmhouse, and found that lady looking very happy.

"Catherine, my dear, sit down. I have good news. I have just received a letter from Archer. He will be in Rich-

mond in four days from this; but his duties are such that he will not be able to leave Richmond for some weeks. He begs me to meet him there. He has been promoted, Kate! He is now Major Clifton, and has been appointed aide-de-camp to the Governor!"

"I am rejoiced to hear it, madam," replied Kate calmly, though her heart stood still with the suddenness of this news. "You will send over and inform Miss Clifton—will you not, madam?"

"No, I think not, Catherine. Why excite and disturb her on the eve of a journey? Besides, Catherine, I have many misgivings! This long persistence in silence—his never mentioning her name in any of his few letters to me; his never replying to the letter I wrote upon the subject—all this is foreboding! I must not meddle farther in this affair until I have seen my son, and can judge his state of mind in regard to it! But, Catherine, my dear, I sent for you for this: I am going to Richmond on Tuesday, for the purpose of spending some weeks near my son. I need a female companion, and I have your grandfather's and your brother's consent for you to accompany me; that is, if you are willing. Will you go with me, Kate?"

"I shall be very glad to do so, indeed, Mrs. Clifton," said the young girl.

"Then return home at once, Kate, and prepare for the journey. You will have a great deal to do, to make things comfortable for your grandfather and brother during your absence, and to get yourself ready for your city visit.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN THE CITY.

On her arrival at Richmond, Mrs. Clifton engaged for herself and Catherine two rooms—a chamber with two beds, and a neat adjoining parlour—in a quiet, retired boarding-house.

Miss Clifton was the guest of Mrs. Cabell, in the most fashionable quarter of the city. Captain Clifton had not yet arrived, but was daily expected. Richmond was in the

commencement of the fashionable season, and was already quite full of gay company. Every evening witnessed some one or two grand balls, or great private parties. The theatres and the concert-rooms were in full operation. But no faint echo of all these various forms of revelry came to the sequestered neighbourhood that Mrs. Clifton had chosen for her retreat; no news of the fashionable world reached her, except constant bulletins of Mrs. Georgia Clifton's progress through society. She was one of those city celebrities whose sayings and doings are the exciting topic of all classes. Where she went, and what she wore, and when she rode out—whom she cut directly, whom she smiled upon, whom she slighted, and whom she received—were the most interesting subjects of discussion. The Belle of the Rappahannock, the Dark Ladye, the Gipsy Beauty, were some of the many names she had won. All these matters were freely and lightly commented upon in Mrs. Clifton's presence by gentlemen boarders, who knew nothing whatever of that lady's connexion with the reigning toast of Richmond. Mrs. Clifton rested two days before calling upon Mrs. Cabell and her family. Miss Clifton expressed almost as much surprise as pleasure at the sight of her aunt, but forebore to question her motive in coming so suddenly to the city; perhaps Carolyn had heard a rumour of Major Clifton's preferment and expected arrival, and for that reason was silent. Mrs. Clifton never named the subject during her informal call. At taking leave, she left her address, and informed her niece that Kate Kavanagh was in town with her. Carolyn expressed much pleasure at hearing this, and promised to call very soon. The very next day Mrs. Cabell came in her carriage, and invited and urged Mrs. Clifton and her *protégée* to return with her, and make her house their home during their sojourn in Richmond. After some hesitation and reflection, Mrs. Clifton accepted the invitation, and promised to go over the next day. The next morning, therefore, Mrs. Cabell sent her carriage to convey Mrs. Clifton and Catherine. They were received by Mrs. Cabell with great politeness and *empressement*, and conducted by that lady herself into two large and luxuriously-furnished chambers, connected with each other, where they found a neat, pretty mulatto girl, ready to wait upon them; for Mrs. Cabell, with all her hard worldliness, was truly kind and hospitable.

The evening of the succeeding day was the appointed time for the Governor's first reception. Mrs. Cabell and her family were going, of course; and Mrs. Clifton resolved to go—not for her own sake, but for that of Catherine, whom she had determined should see all that was to be seen during her stay in the metropolis. A somewhat haughty surprise elevated the handsome black eyebrows of Mrs. Cabell, when she found that Mrs. Clifton intended to take her *demoiselle du compagnie*, but she was far too well bred to express it in any other manner; and as for Mrs. Clifton, she always did whatever she thought proper to do in the coolest, calmest, most matter-of-course manner, without the slightest regard to other people's weaknesses and follies. You know, besides, that she was a thorough republican. And Mrs. Cabell remembered that the public reception at the gubernatorial mansion was a sort of *omnium gatherum*, where all who behaved themselves might come—from the oldest major-general of the army to the shoemaker who made his boots; and again, no one in Richmond knew who the girl really was. All these things had Mrs. Cabell to recall to mind before she could reconcile herself to the idea of Kate's being of the party.

When the night and the hour arrived, several gentlemen, beaux of the Misses Cabell, came to escort the ladies. Major Cabell attended his cousin Carolyn and one of his sisters. Judge Cabell took charge of his wife and eldest daughter. Mrs. Clifton had hoped that her son would have reached the city in time to have escorted herself and Catherine. When they were all assembled in the parlour, Major Cabell brought a gentleman up to Mrs. Clifton, whom he presented as Colonel Conyers, of the army, leaving to Mrs. Clifton the responsibility of presenting the aristocrat to the plebeian Kate. Mrs. Clifton did it at once, in the most natural way in the world; and the gallant colonel, after a few compliments, hoped to have the honour of waiting upon Mrs. Clifton and her "lovely charge" to the Mansion House. Mrs. Clifton gratefully accepted his services, and soon after they entered the carriage, and were driven off. This party reached their destination a full half hour before Mrs. Cabell and family, and other ultra-fashionables, who fancied that it was vulgar to go early, and imagined that their *ton* depended upon late hours and other observances.

Mrs. Clifton was very plainly dressed, in a black satin, with a lace scarf; Catherine very simply, in a white crape, with a scarlet geranium twined in her black hair. A moment in the cloak-room sufficed to re-arrange their simple toilet. They were then conducted into the saloon. This apartment was fitted up in a somewhat different style to those of the present day. It was illuminated by three large hanging chandeliers, holding innumerable wax candles; and warmed by two enormous coal fires, one at each extremity. It was already well filled with a miscellaneous company. After their presentation to the Governor, Colonel Conyers inquired whether they chose to join the promenade or to take seats. Mrs. Clifton preferred the latter, and their polite escort conducted them to a side sofa, from which they could note the entrance of fresh guests, and watch the great circle of promenaders going round and round in one long elliptic, three or four persons deep, in the most stupid, treadmill monotony conceivable. Very much interested and amused was our simple country-girl, in taking observations of the various characters passing in review before them. Here would be a dowager of sixty in rouge, ringlets, bare arms, and a gossamer dress; here a girl of seventeen in a black, stiff brocade and heavy head-dress. Here comes a stately, broad-chested, senatorial-looking man: he *looks* the incumbent of some high, official place—he *is* the master tailor, of —— street. Here comes a red-headed, red-faced, sharp-featured little man, very quick and impatient in his motions, and very high in his voice: he looks like an auctioneer or a constable—he is the great General ——, of the United States Army. Here is a small, dowdy woman, all fuss and flowers, like a barnhouse actress—she is the wife of the late Governor ——. This is a queenly woman—tall, stately, dignified, with a fine, royal countenance. Pooh! Don't ask who she is—she is the "leading lady" at the city theatre, plays in all the heavy tragedies, but is not even a star. There, apart, watching and reflecting upon the scene, stands a grave-looking individual, in a closely-fitting black suit, and closely-cropped black hair, and set, sallow, saturnine face, looking like an undertaker at a funeral—doubtless some famous preacher, though so miserable a messenger of the glad tidings cannot be imagined. Preacher, indeed! Why, he is H——, the low comedian; and he wears his hair cropped that way

by reason of the many different sorts of wigs he has to wear in his different impersonations. To-night, he happens to be off the boards, and enjoys the recreation of sadness and gravity. Ah! here is a debonair gentleman, all life!—a laugh and jest, or a smile and a bow for everyone. Is he a French dancing-master? No, he is the Rev. Mr. ——, the most popular preacher of the day. Yet these were not all. There *was* a small proportion of really well-dressed and dignified women, and stately, honourable men.

"How do you like the scene, Catherine?" asked Mrs. Clifton.

Kate laughed, and then replied, "I am somewhat disappointed, but very much more diverted! It seems to me so strange that people should look, dress, and behave so very inappropriately; and that they could possibly be so very ill-dressed and dowdy at such a great expense. I expected something very *récherché* and elegant in the saloon of the Governor's mansion; but 'motley is the only wear!'"

The officer laughed gaily, and then observed, "Why? Why did you look for something, or rather for everything *récherché* and elegant in this crowd? Because you see in the newspaper-reports of such gatherings such phrases as 'the beautiful Miss A——?'—by-the-way, there she is: the young lady with the red hair, milk-white complexion, and little eyes—or 'the elegant Mrs. B——?' 'the graceful Mrs. C——?' &c. &c., with revised and improved accounts of their costume, appearance, manners, &c.? Miss Kavanagh, when you have stayed in the city longer, you will know that when a newspaper-reporter and letter-writer speaks of that dowdy but wealthy little woman in the flimsy scarlet dress, as 'the beautiful, elegant, and accomplished Mrs. G——,' and tells of 'the immense (imaginary) sensation' she made, *he*, the reporter, is morally certain of an invitation to her private parties."

Kate did not like his sarcastic tone; but before she could make any sort of reply, her attention was called to a rising excitement in the room. Every gentleman, from the fidgety little major-general down to the grave and dignified low comedian—and every lady, from the ex-Governor's fussy widow to the stately and self-possessed stock actress—were on the *qui vive*. Kate, while listening and watching for the cause of the excitement, caught a few phrases that helped to

enlighten her. They were of this sort: "A wonder! a perfect wonder! A miracle of dark beauty!" "The wealthiest woman in the state, but that is nothing to her marvellous beauty." "Did you see her as '*Egypt*,' at the fancy-ball?" "Her portrait, in oil, by ——, stands in Stationers' Hall. It has attracted crowds." "No; I have seen the engraving from it in 'Beauty's Annual' for this year. But I have also seen it on the tops of cigar-boxes—too bad!" "Hush! here she comes!"

Catherine turned her eyes in the direction towards which all others were gazing. It was Georgia—dark, bright, and more beautiful and bewitching than ever. Her dress was of lustrous black *crepe de lise*, sprinkled over with gold spangles, that gleamed in and out through the dark, transparent drapery, suggesting clear, starlight night. A crowd entered with the star-bright Circe—a crowd attended her during all her progress through the room.

We must leave Georgia to her alluring wiles, and Catherine to her observations, and seek Mrs. Cabell and her party. They are in the dressing-room, and about to leave it; only Mrs. Cabell turns again and again to survey her form in the mirror, and re-adjust the flow of her purple satin dress, or the wave of her white ostrich plumes. When all is done, she turns for the last time to Carolyn, to rebuke her for not adding a single ornament to her mourning-dress of black velvet, which is relieved only by the falls of fine Brussels lace on the neck and arms, and the sunny ringlets falling all around her head as low as the throat. Carolyn looks very fragile, but interesting and lovely, though she does not know it. Major Cabell gave his right arm to his mother, and his left to his cousin; and so, as it was now the acme of the fashionable hour, they entered the saloon, and made their slow progress up to the upper end, where the Governor and staff stood to receive all comers—Mrs. Cabell bowing and smiling to such acquaintances as she chose to recognise in passing, until at length they stopped. A feeling of false shame, a morbid notion that all eyes were upon her, and scrutinised the few pits hidden under the golden curls on her temples, had caused Carolyn to cast her eyes down, and keep them down, during the whole progress through the room; and though her acute ears heard such murmurs as these, "How fair she is!" "But how fragile, as if a zephyr would

blow her away," she never fancied they were breathed of her, and never surmised the admiration she elicited. "Governor T——, Miss Clifton of Clifton," were the words that admonished Carolyn she was standing before the great man, and must look up and curtsey. She curtseyed before she looked up; and when she raised her eyes, she saw only Archer Clifton before her, who bowed when he met her glance! The Governor and many others were there, but how could she see anyone but Archer Clifton! But, oh, the perversity of human nature! As soon as she met his eyes, all the pride and scorn of her proudest, most scornful days returned upon her with a vengeance—all the more fiercely, ferociously that she believed herself a fright, and found Archer Clifton handsomer, more dignified, higher in favour with God and man than ever. Major Cabell was about to pass on instantly with his ladies, to give place to the next arrivals. Returning Archer Clifton's bow with a haughty bend, she threw up her head and swept on with the most superb air of arrogance imaginable. They joined the promenaders—Carolyn all the more unhappy for her show of *hauteur;* the heart beneath that erected head and expanded chest almost breaking with chagrin. Captain, now Major Clifton, stood at the right hand of the Governor, with his eyes roving calmly over the miscellaneous assembly, until they chanced to rest upon the stately form of his mother, when they lighted up with surprise and pleasure; and, excusing himself from his official attendance, he bowed and withdrew, to hasten to the distant sofa, where she sat alone. Catherine, on the arm of Colonel Conyers, was lost in the slowly-revolving crowd of promenaders. He reached Mrs. Clifton's side, and—

"My dearest mother!"

"My dear Archer!" were the greetings exchanged between them with the clasped hands.

"How delighted I am to see you; yet how tantalising to meet you in this public assembly, after so long an absence!"

"When did you reach the city, Archer?"

"Within the last half-hour. Having important despatches for the Governor, I came at once hither."

"I did not see you enter."

"I came in by the private entrance, and joined his Excellency's circle directly. But, my dearest mother, I scarcely

hoped you would be in town; how long have you been here?"

"About four days, Archer."

Suddenly, both became grave and thoughtful; they were occupied with the same thoughts—of the calamities that had befallen mutual friends since their last parting. They were silent—they did not like to sadden this first meeting by referring to the mournful subject; and before either knew of her approach, Mrs. Georgia had glided swiftly and silently up to them. Now, Mrs. Georgia had passed and repassed Mrs. Clifton a score of times that evening without once noticing her; but now that Archer Clifton sat by his mother's side, the Circe appeared before them—dark, resplendent, alluring as ever. She was leaning upon the arm of the Lieutenant-Governor. Archer Clifton sprang up immediately, and greeted her with surprise and pleasure. Dismissing her escort with a charming smile and wave of the hand, she sank gracefully, languishingly into the seat by the side of Mrs. Clifton, and glided into her own fascinating style of conversation. After a few minutes, Archer Clifton seemed quite lost to everything else in the charm of the syren's society, until a certain, sweet, enticing restlessness on the part of the beauty suggested to him the propriety of inviting her to promenade. She arose with a bewildering smile that quite drove his mother out of his head, and slipped her arm through his. They joined the promenaders. In the meantime, Kate Kavanagh, on the arm of Colonel Conyers, was moving around in the same circle, highly amused in making observations, and scarcely appreciating the sincere admiration of her escort, that was apparent to everyone else, especially to the correspondent of the *Fiddle-de-dee*, who in his next letter, in giving an account of the reception, made an item of the manifest admiration of the gallant and distinguished Colonel C—— for the beautiful and accomplished Miss K——. Catherine at length thought that her kind patroness might be lonely, and expressed a wish to rejoin her. In turning to retrace their steps, they met face to face with Archer Clifton and his companion. Major Clifton recognised the poor mountain-girl in that saloon with a look of supercilious surprise, and Mrs. Georgia looked calmly through her body without seeing her at all. With a slight bow, Major Clifton passed on with his companion; and as for Kate, her

heart had a habit of standing perfectly still in an emergency, and now it had stopped so suddenly, and stood still so long, that she was on the verge of fainting.

"You are not well; you are wearied; you have remained on your feet too long. Let me take you to a seat, Miss Kavanagh," said the Colonel. With a gasp and a shiver, Kate recovered and rejoined Mrs. Clifton; and she permitted herself to fall into no more weakness that night But Kate had unconsciously betrayed her secret to the officer; and, by the interference of her good angel, this knowledge, thus obtained, enabled Colonel Conyers to do Kate a service of vital importance in after-years.

"Archer is come," said Mrs. Clifton, as Catherine took her seat.

"I know it—I met him," replied Catherine, and both fell into silence, for at that instant Major Clifton and the beautiful Georgia passed them; and from that time, and so long as they sat there, again and again, in the slow revolving of the great circle of promenaders, the pair passed and repassed them—Georgia smiling, cooing, murmuring, in her low, alluring music; and Archer Clifton bending over her, with his brilliant grey eyes feeding on her lovely face, seeming to sink deeper and deeper into the bathos of her charms, while Carolyn turned sick with jealousy, and Catherine faint with dread, and the correspondent of the *Fiddle-de-dee* made a note of the distinguished favour with which the most beautiful Mrs. C——, the reigning belle of Richmond, received the *devoirs* of her distant relative, the celebrated Major C——. Fear nothing, Carolyn, or Catherine, Archer Clifton is not in love with his uncle's widow—that very relationship would repel the idea, if nothing else; but he is not indifferent to the honour of monopolising the reigning queen of the *ton*.

"Aunt Cabell," said Carolyn, "I cannot sit up longer. I *must* go home."

And Mrs. Cabell consented to gratify her wish. In fact, it was growing late; and the ultra-fashionables, the last to come and the first to leave, were beginning to disappear. Mrs. Georgia unwillingly discovered this fact; but she thought that at least she could adroitly secure the services of her companion as an escort home, and detain him to any hour in the little paradise of her own boudoir. She therefore

expressed herself ennuied, and intreated Major Clifton to conduct her to the cloak-room. He attended her thither; and there he met again his cousin Carolyn. She looked so fair, so wan, so fragile, that he could not for a moment take his eyes from her. He hastily adjusted the mantle over the shoulders of Georgia, handed her her muff and hood, and, excusing himself for a moment, hurried back to his mother's side.

"You have company home, madam, have you not?"

"Certainly, Archer; I should not be here without such a provision. Here comes Colonel Conyers now to attend us."

"Good-night, then; I will see you early to-morrow. Good-night, Kate." He was off.

Mrs. Cabell and Carolyn, leaning on Major Cabell's arms, reached their carriage-door. The major dropped his cousin's arm a moment to assist his mother in, and to settle her in her seat; and, during that moment, Carolyn felt an arm passed around her waist, and a voice whisper, "Carolyn, my beloved cousin! my bride! am I forgiven?"

She burst into tears, and dropped her proud head on his bosom, exclaiming, "O Archer! am *I* forgiven?"

He placed her in the carriage, and, springing in past Major Cabell, took the seat by her side, leaving the major to follow as he could, and forgetting the very existence of Mrs. Georgia.

Kate was close to them; she saw and heard it all. Nodding her head slowly several times, she murmured, "Thank God! Thank God! O merciful Father! help me to say that sincerely. Thank God!"

Three weeks after this they were married. The ceremony was performed in the ancient church of St. John's on Richmond Hill—one of the oldest places of worship on the whole continent. Mrs. Cabell would willingly have made this event the occasion of a great deal of ostentatious display; but the recent afflictions in the family, and the fragility of the bride, rendered other arrangements necessary. Therefore, immediately after the ceremony, which came off at an early hour of the morning, the newly-married couple, taking advantage of the very fine weather, departed for Norfolk, with the intention of sailing thence to Havana, where, by the advice of an eminent physician, for the re-establishment of the bride's health, they purposed to spend the winter.

Mrs. Georgia Clifton, with all the other members of the family connexion, had, of course, been present at the marriage; and no one was so lavish of smiles, tears, caresses, and congratulations, as the dark-eyed syren. But when all was over, and the bridal pair had departed, refusing the invitation of Mrs. Cabell to go home and dine with a party of friends, she hurried to her lodgings, pushed open the door of her luxurious boudoir, fastened it on the inside, and threw herself down, rolling over, tearing at the carpet, and gnashing her teeth in an agony of disappointment, jealousy, and impotent rage.

But not long did the Circe of Richmond yield herself up to anguish and despair. Christmas was approaching, when she was expected to entertain a select number of her worshippers at White Cliffs. It was expedient that she should go down a few days in advance of the party, to make ready for their reception; therefore, about five days after the marriage, she left the city.

Mrs. Clifton remained a week longer in town, to give Catherine an opportunity of attending a course of lectures on Moral Philosophy; and their escort every evening was Colonel Conyers.

CHAPTER XXII.

LIFE S VARIOUS PHASES.

It was always Mrs. Clifton's rule to spend Christmas at home; so she arranged to leave Richmond on the twenty-third. It was three o'clock on the dark, cold, winter morning that the stage called for them. Our travellers were muffled up to the ears in hoods, cloaks, shawls, and furs; and when they entered the coach, they seemed to fill up all the back. It was so dark that they could see nothing, and the stage seemed to be vacant of other passengers than themselves; until Mrs. Clifton, settling her own outer garments, spoke, cautioning Catherine to fold her cloak carefully about her. Then another voice spoke, from the opposite seat, exclaiming in a tone of surprise and pleasure, "Why, is it possible! Mrs. Clifton and Miss Kavanagh?"

"Yes, Colonel Conyers; and I am as much pleased as sur-

prised to find you here! How comes it that we are fellow-travellers?" said the lady, placing her own in his offered hand.

"And how do you do, Miss Kavanagh? Really, I am so overjoyed to find you here! Why, you must know, my dear Mrs. Clifton, that I have been due at White Cliffs for several days; I am, in fact, the laggard of a party—but, in truth, I could not tear myself from Richmond while you and Miss Kavanagh remained. But last night, after taking leave of you, as I supposed, for some length of time, under great depression of spirits, Miss Kavanagh, I sent and had a place taken in this stage for L——, which I understand to be the nearest stage-station to White Cliffs. Why, how little did I suspect that we were to travel by the same coach! Truly, 'life is full of paper walls.' A word dropped by either of us last night would have revealed the fact to the other. But how delighted I am, Miss Kavanagh! And may I hope, Mrs. Clifton, that our journey lies for some distance together?"

"For the whole distance, I am happy to say. The plantation of White Cliffs and the farm of Hardbargain join. Our journey terminates at L——."

"Really! Why this is excellent! So, instead of being separated, we shall travel all the way together, and then continue to be neighbours for some weeks. Miss Kavanagh, I am overjoyed."

There was not much travelling at that season of the year, so our party of three had the coach to themselves; and Colonel Conyers devoted himself with great assiduity to the comfort of the ladies.

At the end of the second day, just as the level beams of the setting sun were gilding all the village windows, the stage rolled into L——.

There, before the little tavern-door, waited Mrs. Clifton's old-fashioned carriage.

"Did you notify the family of White Cliffs of your intended arrival here to-day?" asked Mrs. Clifton of Colonel Conyers.

"No, madam. My journey was resolved upon so suddenly, out of my grief and my impatience at the supposed loss of your own and Miss Kavanagh's society, that I had no time to write."

"Ah! that is the reason why their carriage is not waiting

for you. Colonel Conyers, if you will take a seat with us to Hardbargain, and rest for a few hours or a few days as you please, we shall be very glad, and we shall furnish you with a conveyance to White Cliffs whenever you wish to go."

Colonel Conyers expressed himself but too happy to accept Mrs. Clifton's invitation; and they all entered the old-fashioned carriage, and set out for Hardbargain. The farm was nine miles distant, and the road the very roughest, even of mountain turnpikes. Colonel Conyers ventured to wonder how any carriage could stand it, and surmised that R—— County must be blessed with the best wheelwrights in the world, to which Mrs. Clifton replied that they *had* the very best to be met with anywhere.

It was ten o'clock at night when they reached Hardbargain; but they found the hall lighted up, fires blazing in the parlour and the dining-room, and a substantial supper waiting for the order of the mistress. The farmhouse looked cheerful, hospitable, and inviting; and Colonel Conyers rubbed his hands in delight. He remained over night. The next day was Christmas, and nothing but the binding engagement to render an account of himself to the beautiful Georgia at least by Christmas could have forced him to White Cliffs that day. He accepted Mrs. Clifton's cordial invitation to come over often while he remained in the neighbourhood.

In fact, Mrs. Clifton had seen that Colonel Conyers was very much pleased with Catherine, and she felt desirous that he should have an opportunity of winning the affections of her favourite. Colonel Conyers took the largest advantage of Mrs. Clifton's hospitality, and not even the charms of the syren of White Cliffs could wile him away from his daily evening ride over to Hardbargain; and so, after a few weeks, as there is no accounting for tastes, and as the most extraordinary things sometimes really do happen, it turned out that Colonel Conyers actually did lay his heart, hand, and fortune at the feet of the humble girl whom his own subordinate officer, Captain Clifton, had despised, and, furthermore, that he was rejected by her. Yes, gratefully, kindly, but firmly and finally rejected; and, full of disappointment, humiliation, and sorrow, the gallant colonel abruptly concluded his visit, and returned to town.

"O Catherine, my dear, if you could but have liked him

well enough to have married him! He is an honest, kind-hearted man," said Mrs. Clifton, with a sigh of regret.

"Yes, he is a good man. Heaven bless him with a good wife!" answered Kate.

Neither of these unworldly women once reverted to the advantages of rank resigned with the rejected lover; and soon Catherine had other thoughts and occupations than those connected with courtship and marriage. The situation of her grandfather demanded all her care. For many months before this, the long and persevering efforts of the patient girl had been blessed with success, and the old man had abandoned the use of intoxicating spirits; but within the last few weeks the total disuse of the stimulant to which he was morbidly accustomed had begun to produce the most dangerous effects upon his aged and infirm frame. He grew weaker, and still weaker, until at length he was confined to his bed; and so he slowly sank and failed, as weeks, weary weeks, dragged on to months; and through all this dreary time, day and night, Catherine faithfully nursed him. Many a night she sat the only watcher by his bedside, hourly expecting his death; and many a morning he revived again, so deep a hold had life upon that old, worn body. Scarcely for necessary food or rest would Catherine leave him, always watching, waiting on, and cheering him; sometimes, whenever he desired it, reading the Bible to him, singing, or praying with him. In vain Mrs. Clifton, noticing the careworn, toil-worn, emaciated countenance of the girl, besought her to take care of her own health. Catherine cared for nothing on earth so much as the aged man daily fading away from her sight; and so passed the winter, and so opened the spring; and then his old disease, if it could be called a disease, took a most alarming turn. After a paroxysm more violent than ever had come on him before, he fell into a state of greater prostration; and the physician, hastily summoned, declared that another such attack would be fatal, and that only the use of brandy could ward the fit off and save his life. Carl Wetzel replied that he felt if he should taste the intoxicating liquid again, the fatal appetite for alcohol would return upon him with tenfold violence for the temporary abstinence, and that it would totally subject him to its dominion. The doctor called him a fool and a fanatic, without self-control or self-reliance, and left him to his fate. When the physician had

left the hut, the old man called his grand-daughter to his bedside.

"Kate, you heard what the doctor said?"

Kate nodded—her heart was too full for speech.

"My dear child, my dear, good Kate, he says that unless I drink brandy I shall die; but Kate, if I taste brandy again, I feel I shall live a drunkard. Kate, I know you are wise and good beyond your years. Kate, I have full faith in you; my child, I will do as you decide for me. Darling, shall I drink or die?"

Kate sank upon her knees by his bedside, took both his venerable hands and kissed and pressed them to her bosom, bowed her face over them, and wept in silence; at last, raising her head, she gazed earnestly, reverently, lovingly in the old man's face, and answered, "Dearest grandfather, do not ask me, a poor, weak, erring girl; dearest grandfather, ask God!"

The old man feebly raised his hand, and placed it on her head and blessed her, adding, "I thank thee, O Father! that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise."

The next morning, when the doctor came, he found the old man sinking fast, yet clinging, as human nature will cling, to the wish for—the hope of—life.

"Doctor, is there no other way of saving me than that you spoke of?"

"None, whatever, my good friend; unless you consent to save yourself by taking alcohol, you must die."

"Then I will die!" replied Carl Wetzel.*

And within a week from this time the old man died and was buried.

After the funeral was over, Mrs. Clifton invited and urged Catherine to come and take up her permanent residence at Hardbargain. There were now no reasons why Catherine should not, and many why she should, accept this very advantageous offer.

Her brother Carl was about to bring home a wife, after which he would no longer need Catherine's services; and now that the spring had fully opened, Mrs. Clifton's health, as usual at that season, failed, and she really needed the companionship and care of our unprofessed Sister of Charity;

* A fact.

and therefore Catherine accepted her proposal, and came to take possession of the room Mrs. Clifton had fitted up for her, adjoining her own chamber. It had once been Archer Clifton's room; that was of no consequence to Catherine now, however. You need not now be told again that the girl was a true Christian. She had great faith; she believed in miracles, asserting that the days of miracles had not passed—could not pass until the days of God's omnipotence and man's faith should be passed. When the passion of her heart was about to become the sin of her soul, she prayed to God to remove the last vestige of that erring, ill-fated love; and it was removed—gone. She could think of him, speak of him, without an altered pulse. She knew that he and his wife were soon expected at White Cliffs, and she felt that she would meet them again without any other emotion than pleasure. On the day of her removal to Hardbargain, Mrs. Clifton said to her, "Catherine, I see by the *Richmond Standard* that Archer has resigned his post in the army."

"It is not possible, madam!"

"Yes, indeed. I was very much astonished to see it."

"What in the world could have been his motive?"

"I cannot even form an idea. No motive was assigned in the paper."

"And did he never mention his intention to you in any of his letters?"

"Never, Kate. But, indeed, I have not heard from him for six weeks. I cannot tell the reason why he does not write. Perhaps his letters have been lost—the foreign mails are so irregular."

"Was he at Havana when you heard from him last, madam?"

"Yes, Catherine; but then he spoke of a speedy return home. They should have been here long before this time, or, at least, he should have written to account for their delay. I send Henny regularly to the post-office—I have sent her to-day. I hope I may get a letter, though the chances seem to diminish."

Even while they spoke the girl came in with a letter in her hand. Mrs. Clifton took it and looked at it, saying, "At last! It is from Havana, Catherine—from Archer."

She opened it, and as she read it her face became very

grave; and, having finished, she fell into thought, and said, "It is as I feared."

"I trust there is no bad news, madam," said Catherine.

"You shall hear, Kate," replied the lady, taking up the letter and reading as follows.

"*Havana, May* 1, 18—.

"MY DEAR MADAM,—I have to intreat your forgiveness for a silence of four or five weeks. I know that you will pardon the seeming neglect when you are advised of the cause. Every moment of my time, for the last month, has been taken up in attendance upon the sick couch of my dearest Carolyn. Since the opening of the spring, her health, for the last year so fragile, has fearfully failed. I have had the best medical advice to be found on the island, but her illness has baffled their utmost skill. They have recommended me to take her to the south of France. In order to do this, I have been obliged to resign my commission in the army; you have, doubtless, seen my resignation announced in the papers. I suppose the unsettled business of the White Cliffs estate must also suffer by my absence at this time; but what is that—what is anything—all things—in comparison to the health of my beloved Carolyn? I write in great haste, on the very eve of sailing, for we go on board the *Swallow*, bound from this port to Marseilles, to-day.

"With undying respect and affection,

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

"That is very distressing! Alas! then, is life made up of nothing but vain desires and blighted hopes—of sorrow, and sickness, and death?"

"I knew it would be so, Catherine; that was a secret reason I had for not meddling this last time in bringing about a reconciliation between Carolyn and Archer. I have known for two years past that she was following her mother. All those Gowers die early of consumption."

"But, madam, let us hope better things. This sea-voyage, and residence in the south of France, may restore her."

"Never, Catherine; and it was even cruel in the doctors to send her there to die in a foreign land, among strangers. They had better have sent her home to the scenes of her

childhood and youth, where we could have cheered and nursed her. Catherine, I feel very sad."

The tears were rolling down Kate's face. The fountain of consolation in her heart was almost dry; and again she had to lift her heart to the divine source of all strength and light for new faith and hope. Little else but suffering and sorrow had she seen since she came into the world, and no part had she filled in it but that of servant, nurse, or comforter.

The summer passed with Mrs. Clifton and Catherine in almost uninterrupted retirement. They heard, at long intervals, from Major Clifton and his bride, and then the news was various and unsatisfactory. Sometimes Carolyn was better, and there would be a talk of speedy return; and, perhaps, the very next letter, after a long interval, would speak of a season of prostration by extreme illness; and about the middle of the autumn, Mrs. Clifton received a letter from her son announcing their intention of wintering in Lisbon. The irregular arrivals of these bulletins were the most interesting, and nearly the *only* interesting events of the summer and autumn, if we except a descent upon White Cliffs by Mrs. Georgia and her friends. The syren, after her return from a summer tour to the fashionable watering-places, determined to fill up the dull interim before the commencement of the season in town by a visit to her "seat in R——," as she persisted in calling White Cliffs. Accordingly, she made up a party of idle ladies and sporting gentlemen, and came down to spend September.

Colonel Conyers was among the guests. He renewed his visits to Hardbargain and his suit to Catherine—received a second rejection, and hurried off to town under the sting of mortification as before. At the 1st of October, the "city riff-raff" (as the old family servants of Clifton irreverently and indignantly called the moneyed aristocrats) returned to Richmond, whither they were shortly followed by their beautiful hostess, to prepare for her winter campaign. From this time to the middle of December, no event marked the even tenor of the life at Hardbargain. The inmates had not lately heard from Major Clifton. It was near Christmas. In her anxiety to hear from Lisbon, Mrs. Clifton was in the habit of sending to L—— twice a week, when the mail came in, and sitting up till a very late hour, waiting for the return of the messenger.

One evening after supper, Mrs. Clifton and Catherine sat each side their work-stand, before the fire, awaiting the arrival of the boy who had been despatched to the post-office. So often had the lady thus sat and waited, and been disappointed, that hope waxed very faint. This time, however, she was destined to have her heart gladdened by the full fruition of hope. About nine o'clock the messenger returned, and entered the parlour with a packet of letters and papers. The boy's face was lighted up with sympathetic joy, and he exclaimed, as he handed the bundle, "I almos' rid myself to death, missis, I was so glad I had de letters to bring yer."

"You have made great haste, indeed, Neddy. Go tell Henny to give you your supper," said the lady.

"Good boy," said Kate, pressing his little sooty hand as he passed her and went out.

Mrs. Clifton was reading a letter from Archer. It was written in a glad, buoyant spirit, and contained the best possible news. Against all hope, Carolyn's health, since her arrival at Lisbon, had steadily improved, and it was now so far re-established that they were already looking forward to their voyage at the earliest opening of spring. Carolyn had gained flesh and colour, as well as health, and strength, and cheerfulness, and was looking far better than she had looked since his first meeting her again at Richmond. Mrs. Clifton repeated all this to Catherine, adding, "It is true, Kate, that none of her family who have perished by her disease ever tried a change of climate; and although in most cases such a change hurries the patient to the grave, yet, in some instances, it seems to work wonders in the way of cure; and who knows, if Carolyn is so greatly benefited, that she may not get over this danger, and, if not positively cured, yet live to a good old age, and die at last of something else, as I have heard of consumptives doing."

"I'm so glad!" Catherine sat with her face suffused with the flush, and her eyes filled with the tears of sympathising joy and thanksgiving. After reading and re-reading the letter, and dwelling on it, and talking of it, Mrs. Clifton finally unfolded the paper, the *Richmond Standard*, and, running her eyes over its columns, suddenly exclaimed, "Catherine, 'when joys come, they come not as single spies, but in battalions.' Here is excellent news of an old friend—listen!

Only two or three lines among the 'items' of a newspaper column, yet of what great moment to many! Hear." And the lady read—"At the conclusion of the recent treaty of peace between this Government and the Shoshonowa nation, among the prisoners held to ransom was the gallant Captain Fairfax, supposed to have fallen under their tomahawks at the massacre near Fort Protection. This brave but unfortunate officer is now understood to be on his way to the seat of Government."

Catherine was positively speechless with joy; only her clasped hands and fervent countenance revealed what she felt. In the great though calm surprise and rejoicings over the event, these friends forgot its singularity, until after a long while Catherine exclaimed, "Poor Zuleime! Oh, how *could* such a fatal misrepresentation have been made of the case? It was reported that he was cloven down from his saddle, and then butchered!"

"It was not a wilful misrepresentation; it was a misapprehension. The few who escaped to tell the tale of the massacre no doubt had seen him struck down; and, don't you see? in the terror and confusion they imagined the rest—knowing perfectly well that scalping and rifling the bodies are the almost invariable custom of the savages. And then remember, Catherine, the body taken for the corpse of Captain Fairfax was so rifled and mutilated as to be unrecognisable, except upon circumstantial evidence."

"So, indeed, it was said to be. I would the mistake had never been made, though! It killed Zuleime!"

"Catherine, my child, I have no idea that Zuleime was really drowned."

"Madam!"

"Do you not know, Catherine, that anybody drowned in that part of the river where the supposed signs of her suicide were found must have come to light? Don't you know that the current is very rapid there, and that a ledge of rocks crosses the river a few yards below it, upon which her body must have been thrown if she had been in the river at all? And, Catherine, if I have never breathed this thought before, it was upon account of poor Carolyn. I knew that, in her weak, depressed state of mind and body, she could better bear the belief of Zuleime's death than the frightful uncertainty of her fate. You are discreet, Kate; you will not

breathe this to Carolyn, or to anyone, lest it should reach her ear."

"Never! And do you know, dear Mrs. Clifton, I have sometimes had the thought that Zuleime might yet be living—and I dared not indulge the hope secretly, much less breathe it aloud."

"And what was *your* reason for such a supposition, Catherine?"

"Why, my thought was not so well founded, so logical as yours. I knew nothing about the peculiarities of the river. My thought was only a vague hope, and it agitated me so much as to interfere with my practical duties. I had to banish it."

"You are so sensitive, so sympathetic, my dear girl. Well, Kate, no more exciting talk to-night. We will return thanks to God for these glad tidings, and then retire to rest."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ZULEIME.

Zuleime had been placed by Georgia under the care of a poor woman, the wife of a carver and gilder, who had occasionally worked for her father; and as long as the funds of the belle had held out, the trifling expenses of such poor board and lodging had been regularly paid; but when the syren was reduced to support her own extravagance entirely by credit, founded upon the false reputation of wealth, her small remittances to her *protégée*, or rather her victim, ceased. Zuleime was afraid to seek her, afraid to write to her—there was nothing she feared more than discovery; and the recognition of her handwriting on the superscription of a letter might have led to that. It was long after the death of her father before she heard of it, nor then did she hear any of the particulars of time, place, or circumstance. The fact came to her knowledge irregularly, through the report of the transcendent charms and conquests of his beautiful young widow. A long and dangerous illness was the result of this sudden news. It was some weeks after her recovery before the poor people of the house, who had long despaired of getting any-

thing for her board, could find it in their kind hearts to ask her to seek another home; and even then they sent a sigh after the desolate young widow—the child who went forth carrying in her arms another child. And how she lived during the interval between that and the period at which I shall again introduce her to you, I cannot tell. Sometimes a little fine needlework came to her hands; sometimes a spell of want, reaching almost to starvation; then a little assistance from neighbours; and a little going in debt to shopkeepers. And then she always lodged with the poor; and the poor seldom persecute the poor. Remember that the needy family who first sheltered her had been for months at the sole expense of her food, lodging, and long illness; and yet they had never reproached or persecuted her for unpaid debts, though they scarcely refrained from reproaching themselves for sending her away.

In a quiet, back street, mostly inhabited by very humble people, in the middle of the square, and fronting immediately upon the battered pavement, stood an old two-storey brick house, occupied by a poor cabinet-maker and old furniture dealer. The lower front room was used as the ware-room, and crowded and piled up with every description of miserably dilapidated household furniture, apparently good for nothing else under the sun but kindling-wood, and scarcely worth splitting up for that: old worm-eaten, carved mahogany bureaus and bedsteads; tables without legs or leaves; chairs without backs; cradles without bottoms or rockers; clocks wanting faces; beaufets wanting doors; sofas minus arms; smoky pictures without frames, and tarnished frames without pictures; worm-eaten cabinets, and mildewed looking-glasses; broken pots, pans, and kettles; and mismatched crockery-ware in any quantity.

Reader, I do not wish to give you an inventory of an old furniture shop, but merely some idea of the inextricable confusion in which this heterogeneous mass of worn-out, broken, worm-eaten, mildewed, fly-stained, dust-clothed, cobweb-veiled items were piled up from floor to ceiling. It would make your heart and head ache with wondering what sort of a living could be picked out from so much dirt, disorder, and decay, and who on earth could be the patrons of the establishment. You would unconsciously gather close about you your most worthless dress in passing through the shop,

and look up in involuntary dread of a broken head or limbs, by the fall of some of those dilapidated, ill-balanced, old chairs and tables.

The family of the chair-maker consisted of himself, his wife, and two daughters. They were Germans, with the usual talent of that race for money-getting and money-keeping; and the man made at least a hundred per cent. on every old, rickety, worm-eaten bureau or table that, mended and varnished, left his shop. They added to their income by letting the rooms of their house, and occasionally by taking a profitable boarder.

It was in the early part of the same autumn which found her sister Carolyn in Lisbon, and Mrs. Clifton and Catherine alone at Hardbargain, that Zuleime became a tenant of the German cabinet-maker. She occupied the back room on the second floor—the two daughters of the family using the front room as a sleeping-apartment. She had the use of the street-passage door, and so reached her room without passing through the shop, or any part of the house occupied by the family or their boarders. The refinement in which she had been born and bred was not lost amid her bitter poverty: it constrained her to seek privacy of life, at least. She supported herself and child, just now, by doing fine needlework for some ladies on a transient visit to the city; but the work was precarious, and the supply might be cut off at any moment. Her expenses were small, however, and her economy wonderful. Her neat but poorly-furnished room cost her but ten shillings a month; a bushel of meal and a pint of salt, five shillings; milk for the child, two shillings; fuel, eight shillings; washing, three shillings; candle-light, two shillings; and the attendance of a boy to bring water and cut wood, three shillings—making the sum total of her monthly expenses only one pound fourteen shillings, or little more than six dollars. Her only food was mush or corn-cakes prepared from the meal. She could not have kept up very long under this regimen—indeed, although she knew it not, she was slowly dying of a disease as common, as lingering, and as universally ignored as that of a broken heart—namely, innutrition, or slow starvation. Her German hostess, kind-hearted, notwithstanding her money-grasping propensities, often sent her a bowl of "noodle soup," with a little plate of "sour-krout," and a tumbler of schnapps, or some

such combination of German luxuries. But Zuleime, who managed to exist upon coarse food, could not endure gross food, and she would turn away from such, scarcely able to conceal the sickness the very odour, so appetising to a Dutch stomach, excited in hers; still her refusal of the viands was couched in words so gentle and grateful as never to offend her landlady. Some of my readers may wonder why Zuleime did not do her washing, water-drawing, &c., with her own hands, and take the money paid for having those things done, and buy better food? Because, for one reason, she had not the requisite physical strength or skill; and besides, perhaps, she shrank from the exposure necessarily incurred in these labours. She had not, in these two years, forgotten the delicacy and refinement in which she had been nurtured. On the contrary, everything in her appearance and manners betrayed the gentlewoman. She had but one dress in the world—all the others had been cut up to make clothes for her little girl. Her sole gown was black bombazine, which she had worn daily for nearly two years; yet so good was its original quality, and so well had it been preserved, that it was now neither rusty nor threadbare. It was shaken out and hung up every night, and well brushed and sponged every week. This dress, with the little inside kerchief of linen, was always neat and ladylike. Zuleime's fine needlework gave out, as she knew it would, and she found herself without employment or funds. It was then that Bertha and Wilhelmina Erhmientraut, the daughters of her landlord, told her of a German clothier on Main-street, who had advertised for a number of needlewomen to make vests. Zuleime confessed her total ignorance of that branch of needlework; but the kind German girls promised that, if she would procure the work, they would give her some instructions how it should be done. Zuleime gratefully accepted their offer, and prepared to set out on her long walk by donning the little black bonnet and shawl, as neat and as well preserved as her dress had been. She could not farther tax the kindness of her landlord's family by leaving her child in their care; she had been obliged to put the little one to sleep and lock it up in her room, only leaving her key with her landlady, "in case anything should happen" while she was gone. It was a long, weary tramp to Main-street, where the clothier's store was situated. When she entered the show-shop and made her

business known, she was directed into a back-room, where a man behind a long table was engaged in cutting out garments; and many bundles of cut-out but unmade clothes, tied around with skeins of thread, lay piled up at one end. Zuleime walked up to this table. The foreman, as he appeared to be, laid down his shears and looked up, saying deferentially, "What did you wish to look at, madam? Mr. Schneider, attend this lady."

"You are in error. I do not wish to look at your wares. You advertised work to give out; can I have some?"

The tailor looked at her again. He saw, from her gentle manners and appearance, that she was a lady; guessed from her dress that she was a widow; and knew by her errand that she was self-dependent, unprotected. So there existed no earthly reason why a coarse-minded, craven-hearted man, who spent his whole days in smirking, cringing, deprecating, and deferring to others, should not refresh his soul by a little impertinence and insolence to so safe a subject as a *poor lady*.

"Did you ever make vests?" he asked in a short, curt, insolent manner.

"No," answered Zuleime, "but I sew very neatly—unusually neatly, my patrons say; and as you cut and baste the work, very little instruction would enable me to make them very nicely."

"I shan't trust you! I have had quite enough in my time of giving out work to people who know nothing about the business."

It was not the words so much as the insulting manner of the man that shocked the gentle-hearted woman, and she turned and left the shop ready to sink, not so much under disappointment, though she knew not where to turn for work, or money, or food, but under the deeply-humiliating sense of the rudeness and vulgarity to which she was forced to expose herself in this bitter struggle through the world. She walked slowly, thoughtfully, sadly away from the shop, till the sudden thought of her child's awakening electrified her, and she hurried on until she reached home. She obtained her key from the landlady in the basement, and entered the passage. It was then that she heard a very sweet, gentle voice, apparently near her room-door, saying—

"Don't cry, baby! *poor* baby, don't cry! mother will come

by-and-by! *Dear, pretty* baby, don't cry! I'll bring you all my playthings and a little dog when I can get in."

And then, in the pause of the child's wails and broken talk, and baby plaints, she ran up stairs at once; and there, kneeling before her door, and talking through the keyhole, was a sweet little dark-haired girl of about five years old, and dressed in deep mourning. Her hat of the finest Leghorn straw, the richness of the black ribbon that bound it; the fineness of the black bombazine frock and the linen cambric tucker; the delicate shoes and stockings; the gentle, refined manner—all bespoke a child of a different rank from those seen in that neighbourhood, and especially in that house. The child got up and stood aside when she saw the lady come with the key to unlock the door. When Zuleime had entered her room and lifted the babe to her lap, she called the little girl up to her side. She was a lovely child, indeed, with fair skin and delicate features, jet-black hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes, and large, mournful, dark grey eyes.

"You are a dear little girl. What is your name?" asked Zuleime, putting her arm round her waist caressingly.

"Ida. See what a nice new black dress I've got. They gave it to me when father died. Mother wears one, too. You've got a black dress on, too; is your father dead?"

"Yes, darling," said Zuleime, with her eyes suffused.

"Don't cry, please! Mother cries so much; I do wish she wouldn't. Is the baby's father dead, too?"

"Yes—yes, love; the baby's father is dead, too!"

"Well, please don't cry so! Mother says we have all got a father in heaven! *Oh, please* don't cry so; it gives me such a—such an ache in the breast to see anybody cry so," said the child, and her mournful but most beautiful eyes assumed a pleading, painful, almost querulous look.

"Who is your mother, sweet Ida?" asked Zuleime, to change the subject of her own and her little companion's thoughts.

"Mrs. Knight, you know, the leading lady. Did they put the baby's father in a long red box and send him away?"

"Yes, yes, Ida. Where does your mother live?"

"She lives here, in the back room down stairs. We came to-day. She is going to play to-night, and then I'll be by myself. Did they hold the baby up to kiss her father like they did me? And did he put his hand on her head and call

her his fawn-eyed darling? That was when he was on the bed; and afterwards he went to sleep, and they said he was dead. Was that the way with the baby's father?"

"I don't want to talk about it, dear Ida. Tell me of your mother. What does she play on—the organ?"

"No; I don't know. Yes I do, too—the stage. Look at my nice new hat. It used to have a wreath of red roses round it; but when father died, mother took it off and put this black ribbon there. Mother wears roses on her head, though; at night, I mean. All day long she wears black, and looks so pale, and weeps; but at night she puts beautiful flowers in her hair, and sometimes gold and fine feathers, and she has such sweet long curls and rosy cheeks, and such beautiful dresses. And father used to wear beautiful clothes at night—red and gold, and feathers. I do want to see father so much; I wish they'd bring him back. Do you think it will be long before I see him?" asked the child, as the large tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Perhaps not, my love. Is your mother an actress, then?"

"Yes, that is what she is. Don't cry, now! It gives me a pain in my bosom. Please don't cry; if *you* don't, *I* won't," said the child, wiping her eyes. Then suddenly she exclaimed, "Oh! I forgot, I promised to bring the baby my playthings and my curly dog;" and, so saying, the child ran away and scampered down stairs.

Zuleime looked in vain for her return, and finally concluded that her mother had detained her; but if the child did not come, somebody else did. Wilhelmina entered, and kindly inquired after her lodger's success in seeking work. When she learned her failure, she begged Zuleime not to be troubled, for that there was work in the house for her if she would take it; that the new boarder, Mrs. Knight, the leading lady of the Richmond Theatre, wanted assistance in making up some dresses that were to be ready in a few days; that she, Wilhelmina, had recommended their lodger; and if the young lady pleased, she would conduct her down and introduce her to Mrs. Knight. Zuleime thanked the kind-hearted girl, and prepared to accompany her—sensible, amid all her other emotions, of a rustic's curiosity to see a really living actress, for she had never in her life seen one off the boards. She followed Wilhelmina down the stairs into the passage. Near the foot of the stairs was a door leading into

the first-floor back room. At this door Wilhelmina rapped. It was opened by Ida, who, as soon as she saw Zuleime, exclaimed, "Oh, it's you! Come in. Mother, here is the baby's mother!"

"It is I, Mrs. Knight, with the person I spoke of. May we come in?" inquired Wilhelmina.

"Assuredly. Do so," replied the sweetest, deepest voice Zuleime thought she had ever heard; and they entered the room. Wilhelmina introduced Mrs. Fairfax, and withdrew. The apartment in which Zuleime found herself was the best-furnished room in the house, decidedly—having a good, warm-hued carpet on the floor; crimson stuff curtains at the only back window; a grate with a coal fire; a four-post bedstead, with tester, net valance, and a white counterpane; a bureau, with tall dressing-glass; and wash-stand, with china toilet-service. But it was in a state of confusion only less than that of the adjoining shop; trunks, boxes, and band-boxes of all sizes, forms, and colours, some corded and piled up one above the other, and some open and boiling up and over with all sorts of finery and tinsel, satins, silks, and velvets, feathers, flowers, and fustian, which also trailed upon the carpet, and strewed the chairs. An oil-painting, in a large heady gilt frame, leaned with its face against the wall. On the bed, a black mantle and bonnet, with a widow's veil, lay side by side with a gorgeous scarlet velvet train, embroidered with gold, an imitation ermine robe, a crown of gilt and paste, a plume of feathers, and great bunches of sham pearls. On a low trunk, in the midst of this sad chaos of poverty and glitter, mummery and mourning, sat one who immediately drew and fixed Zuleime's attention: a tall, noble-looking woman of perhaps thirty years of age, clothed in deep mourning, with her heavy black hair banded around her forehead and temples, and shading a countenance dark and cavernous, with its large hollow eyes and hollow cheeks, but majestic with power, earnestness, and truth, and beautiful with those grand, mournful eyes, whose mesmeric spell was felt by Zuleime, on whom they were now brought to bear.

"Take a seat, Mrs. Fairfax. You find me here in great confusion, because I have but just arrived, and have had to unpack, and look over all these trunks, to select and prepare no less than four costumes for the evening," said the same

rich, full, deep tones, as their owner cleared a chair of spangled robes and plumes, and offered it to her visitor.

"Mother is going to wear *this* dress this evening—isn't it pretty?" said Ida, climbing upon the foot of the bed.

Zuleime turned her eyes with childish interest towards the robes; and Mrs. Knight, observing her look of curiosity, said, "They form a portion of the Queen Katherine costume; they are going to bring out 'Henry VIII.' this evening."

Zuleime glanced from the costume to the haggard but noble-looking woman, and thought that she might represent the unhappy Queen very well, as far as personal appearance would go; but instead of expressing this opinion, she said, "The young German girl told me that you wanted some assistance in needlework. I shall be glad to help you."

The dark, mournful eyes rose slowly, and grew still, looking at the young widow, in whom they now began to recognise that most piteous of all beings—*a reduced lady*.

"Sit down, pray sit down," she said to Zuleime, who still remained standing.

Zuleime took the vacant chair.

"Would you object, Mrs. Fairfax, to sitting with me while you sew? There are alterations to be made in these four Queen Katherine dresses, in which you would require my advice."

Zuleime hesitated, and then answered, "I should not like to leave my little child alone, madam."

"Let me—let me—let me go up and stay with the baby!" eagerly interrupted Ida, jumping down from the bed, and running up and seizing the hand of her mother.

The dark eyes sank fondly on the little one, and the rich voice, richer now with maternal love, replied, "Certainly you may, if the lady will permit you to do so."

Zuleime hesitated again, then said, "Thank you, I shall be very glad. Let me go up first, and make the fire safe." And she left the room, followed by Ida, who ran back first, to throw her arms around her mother's neck, and kiss her good-bye.

When Zuleime reached her room, she placed the blower before the grate for safety; hid away all implements with which the children might harm themselves; and, leaving the little ones at play upon the rag carpet, returned below stairs, and went to work. Her new occupation was, indeed, of an

odd and miscellaneous description: ripping off gold lace, and sewing in its place imitation sable; trimming buskins; and, lastly, making up an ancient coiffure—all under the direction of the shadowy-faced woman, who, all this time, sat upon the trunk with a tattered play-book on her knee, studying her part.

Zuleime spoke of Ida—her beauty, her charming manner.

"Is she? Do you find her so? I thought that might be only my partiality. Poor little one! She is a great comfort and a great sorrow to me, if you can understand such a paradox."

"Yes, I can understand it," said Zuleime.

"I have to leave her all the forenoon for the purpose of attending the rehearsals; and then before it is time for her to go to bed, I have to leave her alone, and go to the theatre, and be absent till a late hour of the night; and then the fear of fire, or of accident, while I am gone from her, wears me out. Worse than that, all day and night, while away from her, is the dread of her getting in the street, and into evil company." And the eyes of the woman assumed an anxious, haggard, querulous look, as she dropped them upon her book.

"Give your little girl into my care. I am never absent from home except early in the morning, as to day, and at that hour you are here."

The dark eyes flew up and fastened themselves upon the face of Zuleime, and the deep voice inquired, "Would you really take charge of her for me? Oh, it is too much for you, and too good in you. I don't understand it."

"Indeed, I shall be very glad to do so. The presence of a lovely child is a great pleasure to me. Leave Ida with me this evening while you are gone, and I will put her to bed when the time comes."

"For this evening I will gratefully accept your kindness; but you may find her more inconvenient than you anticipate," said Mrs. Knight; and then she dropped her eyes again upon her book, and Zuleime went on silently with her sewing. About sunset the work was nearly completed; and the costume, with the exception of the coiffure, upon which Zuleime was still engaged, was packed in band-boxes, to be conveyed to the theatre. Then Mrs. Knight rang a little handbell; and when it was answered by the entrance of

Bertha Erhmientraut, she said, "Please send me a lad to carry these boxes for me, and ask your mother to make me a very strong cup of coffee."

Bertha disappeared, and Mrs. Knight put on her bonnet and shawl; and soon a ragged boy appeared at the door, who agreed to carry the boxes for a sixpence. Mrs. Knight loaded and despatched him at the same moment that Bertha re-appeared with a huge cup of strong coffee, which she took and drank off, standing. Then, as she handed back the empty cup to the German girl, and received from Zuleime the finished coiffure pinned up in a paper, she said, "That cup of coffee will give me strength to go through my heavy part to-night, but will leave me at its close more exhausted than ever; thus I discount future health and life for present bread." Zuleime went up to her own room, and prepared the frugal supper for herself and the two children, who were still playing on the carpet. She got a double portion of milk from the German people, on account of her little guest, Ida declaring that she liked milk with corn-cake crumbled in it better than anything—it was so sweet. And then when the babe was undressed and put to bed, the little girl's eyes waxed heavy and dim; and Zuleime took her down stairs into her mother's room, and disrobed, and washed, and prepared her for bed; and when the child was about to kiss her friend and spring into bed, Zuleime said, "Stop, Ida. Don't you say your prayers?"

"No, ma'am."

"But don't you wish to?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," said the child; and, running back, she kneeled down at Zuleime's knees, and placed her little hands together and looked up for instruction.

Zuleime thought the shortest, simplest infant's prayer she knew of was the best, because readily understood and easily remembered; and so she took the little one's folded hands between her own, and bade her repeat after her—

> Now I lay me down to sleep,
> I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
> If I should die before I wake,
> I pray the Lord my soul to take.

"That is a sweet little verse. What *is* my soul?" asked the child.

Zuleime hesitated, puzzled for an answer; then she said

for want of a better, "It is what you think with, and wonder with, and what you are sorry or glad with, and what will live for ever."

"I love you with it, then. Good-night, good, pretty lady."

"Good-night, sweet child." And Zuleime laid her in the bed, and kissed her fair eyelids down to slumber.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CATASTROPHE.

Heaven knows that it is now difficult enough for a poor woman to make a living; but in the days when Zuleime lived and suffered it was even more so. It was especially hard in Virginia, where, owing to the prevalence of the law of entail, the rich were very rich, and the poor very poor—where, besides, ladies took pride in their domestic and industrious habits, the favourite and most inveterate of which was that of doing their own sewing, forgetful of the poor widow and orphan, who might be suffering for the want of the work. It was for such reasons that Zuleime found little or no employment—at most of the houses where she applied she was told that, "We never give out needlework," or that "The ladies of the house do all the family sewing." All very well, in moderation. Industry is a praiseworthy habit, when it does not compromise justice and mercy—when it does not hinder us to "live and let live." Let us be diligent in our several callings; but for Heaven's sake, if we can possibly afford it, let us never refuse to give work to those who need, or who ask it of us. They may be suffering for it, they may be starving for it, they may be dying for it, as Zuleime was. They may be driven to vice, to crime, for the want of it, as Zuleime was not, thank Heaven! Reader, this portion of my story, at least, is no fiction. Nor was Zuleime's case *then* a solitary one; nor would it be such *now*. There are many poor women, in every city, who have not work enough to earn their necessary food and fuel; and this is one of the causes: there are hundreds of ladies, of the middle classes of society, who work themselves nearly to death, and really shorten their lives, by sewing for their

large families, in order to save money to lay out in dress for themselves and children more genteel than needful; or in furniture which they do not live very long to enjoy. And all this time there are hundreds of poor women around them suffering for a part of this very work with which *they* are killing themselves. Yes, hundreds who die annually of innutrition—a slow, cruelly slow starvation, prolonged from month to month, or from year to year, according to their relative strength of constitution. I know it; for I have lived among them, and seen for myself, and not another. The doctors call the want, of which they die, consumption—I think it is rather *non*-consumption. Zuleime sank deeper and deeper into penury. As autumn advanced into winter, and as her necessities increased, her ability to supply them decreased. Her poverty began to betray itself sadly in her personal appearance. Her face was thin and wan, with great, bright, hungry-looking eyes—her hands wasted to semi-transparency. Her only gown, her black bombazine, was rusty and threadbare, and embossed with darns; her shoes were so bad as to look scarcely decent; and amid all her other troubles, there was room for humiliated feelings upon even this account. The present was wretched—the future hopeless. She had heard of people perishing from cold and hunger, and to such an end she thought her life seemed tending. Yet miserable as was the condition of Zuleime, there were many then, are many now, in much worse situations. She at least was starving in a tolerably clean room, in privacy and in peace; far happier than some who perish in the midst of vice, and filth, and squalor. Yes, reader, there are such things; they *do* exist in my neighbourhood, and yours, and it is just as well that they should sometimes be remembered. Zuleime was dying of want. And did the people of the house know nothing of this? Yes, they knew something of it; and her German landlord trembled for his rent, his wife wished that they had never seen the poor thing, and the two girls pitied her very deeply. And Mrs. Knight saw it all, and suffered in sympathy, and gave the poor, dying girl all the work she had to give, and paid her for doing it as liberally as she could afford; but Mrs. Knight was not able, from her scanty salary, to keep up her expensive professional wardrobe, and support two families besides. The greater part of the money Zuleime made by sewing for

the poor actress was paid for rent, to keep the roof over her head that bitter weather, and to supply the daily twopence worth of milk for the child. If a few pence were left over, they were spent in cheap pilot-bread, sparingly eaten by herself. For weeks together she had no fire, no fuel, but would manage to keep her child warm by seating her in the middle of the bed, well wrapped up. By the side of the head of the bedstead, and looking to the south, was the only back window of her room. When she had work, she would sit by this window and sew, while her child sat wrapped up in the bed; when she had no work, she would still sit there and rock her child upon her bosom, singing to her all the while. Unearthly and spiritual was the wan, moonlight face, with its large, luminous eyes—unearthly and spiritual was the voice in which she sang her child to rest, as she sat by the south window. She found room in her burdened heart to love that sunny window, with its glimpses of a river landscape; with waterfalls, and hills, and forests; and nearer, lying between her and the water, the pleasure-grounds around a fair mansion of white freestone that fronted on the river. That fine place took in nearly a whole square, and was separated from this poor house and lot, first, by a broad, back alley; then a tall brick wall, with capacious stables and coach-houses; then the garden, with terraces and conservatory; and so up to the Venetian back piazza of the mansion. Every day, and all day long through the glowing autumn weather, she had sat and feasted her eyes and mind upon these pleasure-grounds, with their gorgeous flowers and magnificent trees, and the palace-home in the midst—a picture of beauty and glory, telling besides of plenty, elegance, refinement, leisure, artistic taste, intellectual pursuits, family union, domestic happiness. Many a time, when going out to look for work, she had walked quite around the square to get in front of the mansion, and satisfy her soul with the architectural beauty and elegance of the edifice, as it stood elevated by a flight of terraces far above the street, and commanding for many miles the mighty course of the river. Often in the autumn weather had she walked under this southern wall; and, even in the midst of her deep distresses, looked up in childish longing at the splendid autumnal flowers trailing luxuriantly over the iron railing. Why did this place interest her so? Not because it was a palace-home, in

such strong contrast to her own poor dwelling—not because she passed it almost every day—not because its magnificent grounds were ever before her sight from her own poor room. Ah, no! But because there was a rural character, and a fine, old, ancestral look about the place, that reminded her of her dear, lost home. Everything connected with the premises interested her—even that capacious family carriage, with its round-bodied, grey coach-horses, and its fat coachman, which appeared every afternoon at a certain hour to take the family out to drive. She did not care to inquire who lived there. One day, when walking in front of the house on the other street, she had seen a lady in deep mourning come out and get in the carriage. She had time to see that the lady appeared bowed in grief, but possessed so sweet and benevolent a face that she was encouraged to call and ask for work. So the next day she entered the beautiful grounds, and ascended the stone steps that led flight by flight up the rising terraces until she reached the Grecian portico and rang the bell. The door was opened by a manservant, to whom she communicated her business. He called a waiting-woman, who came, and, after hearing what the visitor wanted, explained civilly enough that all their needlework was done by a young person who lived companion to her mistress, who was too infirm to see strangers. Zuleime never tried there again; but the sweet sorrowful face of the lady haunted her, and she gazed from her poor window upon the magnificent pleasure-grounds with more of interest than ever.

Truly the world *is* "full of paper walls." How little Zuleime surmised that the mourner in the palace sorrowed over the very same bereavement that had laid her own life waste—that the fair-haired, tender-eyed lady whose grief-worn countenance haunted her son was the mother of her lost Frank; that the proud mansion-house, in the midst of its pleasure-grounds, was the rightful inheritance of the poor babe that rested on her wasted bosom!

How little did the childless and desolate recluse of the palace guess that her lost son's widow sat pining, starving so near her! The world is full of paper walls, but fate makes them firmer, stronger, more indestructible than adamant.

Upon that very same December night that found Mrs.

Clifton and Catherine rejoicing over the good news they had heard from their friends, upon that very night Zuleime sat shivering in her room, without fire, food, or light. She had given her child its cup of milk, and thanked Heaven that she had it to give, though she herself went hungry; and she had wrapped the babe in her shawl, and sat by the window, singing and rocking her to sleep. The room was intensely cold; she was chilled to the heart; her feet were numb and almost lifeless. The only warmth in her body seemed to be the bosom at which the child was pressed. The snow was falling fast without, but even through its flakes she saw the lighted windows of the mansion-house glowing through the crimson curtains, and streaming redly across the snow-clad ground; and she sat and thought of the comforts within that parlour. While she sat there thinking, there came a gentle knock at her door.

"Who is there?" inquired Zuleime.

"It is I, Mrs. Fairfax," replied the voice of the actress.

"Come in, Mrs. Knight."

The actress entered, saying, with a little pardonable tact, "Oh, you are putting your child to sleep in the dark. It is singular some little ones never will go to sleep where there is a light burning. *Is* she asleep?"

"Yes," replied Zuleime.

"Then please put her in bed, my dear, and come down stairs with me. I have something to talk to you about."

Zuleime laid her little girl in bed, and, tottering with weakness, from her long fast and the cold, accompanied the actress down stairs.

Mrs. Knight opened her own room, and revealed a warm coal-fire burning in the grate, and a little supper-table set out with coffee, French rolls, nice butter, and stewed oysters. She set the cushioned rocking-chair for Zuleime, between the fire and the table, and pushed her gently into the seat, saying, "I have holiday to-night, and for a week from to-night, because the opera troupe are here; and so I thought I would just celebrate its commencement by a supper and a ball for two!" and she placed before her visitor a plate of oysters and a cup of coffee. When the little supper was fairly commenced, Mrs. Knight said, "I did not send for you only to take coffee with me—I wished to speak to you on a matter of business. I have been wishing some time to

do so, but scarcely knew how to do it without wounding or offending you." She paused.

"Ah! are you so considerate? Yet you need not fear. I know *you* could not think of anything to say which would —would hurt me."

"At least, I only mean your good; and if I err, you will forgive me."

"Gentle friend! I am used to all the hardness and vulgarity against which a woman has to break her heart and spirit, in struggling through the rough world. Now, think of that; and think whether I can be hurt by anything your kind heart impels you to say. No, I shall be very grateful!"

"Well, this is it, then, my dear. I have not been able to avoid seeing your fruitless efforts to maintain yourself and child, for the last three months. I fear you have scarcely made five shillings a week."

"I have not made that for the last month."

"And there seems to be no chance of doing better—with your needle, I mean."

"Ah, no, no!"

"And your situation is getting worse every day. Poor child! your very shoes are almost gone—there, forgive me! —I have spoken rudely."

"No, no—you have spoken the truth in love. Any truth can be told in the spirit of love."

"And you are wasting away—you will be thrown upon your sick bed; then what will become of your child?"

"Alas, God knows! If we both could die—"

"Yes, if you both *could*. Death is no evil at all." As the actress said this, her hollow, shadowy face grew dark, and her large, luminous eyes glanced aside, and fell upon the floor—fixed in an intense, suffering, almost querulous gaze, as if of one enduring pain. "It must come abruptly at last," she said, looking up suddenly. "My dear, have you any insurmountable prejudices against a theatrical life for yourself?"

Startled by the abruptness of the proposition, Zuleime raised her eyes to the beautiful, dark, irritated countenance before her, without replying.

"You don't understand me. Well, then, to put it plainer, if nothing better at all could be found for you, would you absolutely refuse to go upon the stage?"

Zuleime had understood her very well; and if she still hesitated, it was from a reluctance to wound the spirit of the actress.

"Do you, then, consider the histrionic profession disreputable?" asked Mrs. Knight, with the same suffering, querulous, almost cross expression of the eyes.

"No," said Zuleime very gently, "I do not. Not the profession that Mrs. Siddons ennobled. I think it truly

> The youngest of the sister arts,
> Where all their beauties blend."

"Well, then, my question: Would you object to going on the stage yourself?"

"I am not fit for it," replied Zuleime evasively.

"I do not know that. I need not tell you that you are young and pretty, and singularly graceful, nor that you have a very fine voice for singing—these form a very good foundation; and in elocution, my dear, I would myself become your instructress. What say you?"

"That you are kinder to me than anyone has ever been since I left home; and that I am very, very grateful," Zuleime said very gently.

"But that you despise the calling too thoroughly to follow it, even for bread," said the actress bitterly.

"No, no! I did not say or mean that, indeed; but I, you see, have neither the taste, talent, nor courage requisite!"

"Why not?"

"I was brought up in the privacy of domestic life; in the deep seclusion of the country. I have never been used to *society*, much less to *publicity*; and I am sure that, no matter how well I might be instructed in my part, when I should come before an audience I should forget all about it, and half die of shame."

"Ah, I suppose you have no vocation for it. An actress forgets her own identity in that of the character she represents, and that enables her to go through things she could not otherwise endure; but, my dear, I do not see anything else you can do; and as for the 'stage fright,' as it is called among us, you would soon get that off."

Zuleime shook her head.

"My dear, you do not yet know the plan I have for you. I never thought, no one would ever think of a sudden grand

début for *you*. Nothing but great genius, strong vocation, and perfect self-possession on the part of the *débutante* would justify such a thing. No; the art must be acquired, as other arts are—slowly. This is the plan I had for you, and it entirely precludes the possibility of a stage fright, since you are gradually inured to it. Do you understand me now?"

"No, I do not!"

"Well, then, for instance, and to come to the point. The opera season is about to commence, and the manager wishes to engage about half-a-dozen young girls as chorus-singers. Will you be one? The lowest salary they ever give a chorus-singer is six dollars a week; that is four times as much as you ever earned by the tedious needle. Will you consent?"

Still Zuleime was silent.

"After the opera season is over, I make no doubt that your youth, beauty, and grace, and your very fine voice, will secure you a permanent engagement at an advanced salary. Will you go with me to the manager to-morrow?"

"No," said Zuleime, "I should not dare to go upon the stage. I could not face an audience."

"And you need not face them. You would be in a group of young girls, and no one would notice you, except casually as a part of the scenery. The attention of the audience is taken up with the principal performers. Besides, no one will know who you are; your name need not appear upon the bills. I will take every care of your feelings, if, indeed, you can be sensible of them when hunger and cold are felt."

"I do not like the life," said Zuleime. "I had almost as willingly starve."

The actress rose and rang the bell.

"Oh, it is nothing to me, Mrs. Fairfax; do as you please. I have no earthly interest to serve in persuading you to this step," she said, with the old, cross, querulous look on her haggard face, and in her beautiful dark-grey eyes.

Bertha came in and cleared away the table.

Mrs. Knight walked up and down the room in a hasty, irritated manner.

"I wish I was at work again; I am sick of my holiday already. Since I cannot afford to abandon this hateful art, I wish I were always delving at it, and there came no pause for self-recollection. I wish I were perpetually Queen

Katherine, Mrs. Haller, Isabella, Imogene, Lady Macbeth, Bianca Fazio, and the others, going incessantly through the circle like the earth through the signs of the zodiac. I wish I were always somebody else—anybody else than poor Ida Knight;" and she threw herself into a chair, glancing at Zuleime with a strained, appealing, accusing look. But the wan face of the dying girl, with its hectic flush, smote the rock in her heart, and she moved to her side, and took her hand and said gently, though with the same tone and look of querulous suffering, "It *is* a wretched life! I feel it so—only it is not so bad as starving, and seeing your child starve. My dear, it *is* something to me whether I persuade you to do this thing or not. I cannot bear to see you suffer so. Your necessities weigh upon my heart in addition to my own; and really," she added, with the same frowning, irritated look, "really, I have such a burden of my own, that I grow restive under a feather of anybody else's."

"Then do not take my sorrows on your shoulders, dear lady; I can bear them myself, or die under their weight uncomplainingly. Do not take my troubles to heart!" said Zuleime gently.

The actress looked up with a sharp, rebuking glance, saying, "As if I could help it! You are not sincere when you ask me to do so. No; the only way I can get your griefs off my heart is to get them off your own. I must get you into *living* circumstances; I must persuade you to go on the stage with me. It is not a pleasant profession for a lady, I grant you—neither is freezing or starving, and getting into debt, and being dunned and rebuffed, pleasant; but," she added, with a look of almost fierce self-assertion and self-defence, "neither is it actually *sinful* that I know of. It necessarily transgresses no command of God with which I am acquainted. One need not be a heathen because she is an actress. Mrs. Siddons was a member in full communion with the Church of England. The stage has its dangers, I grant you; but you may safely pass through them if you please. I have done so. I was not born or brought up to that life, my dear. I was the daughter of an English country curate, then a nursery governess, then a travelling-companion to an earl's daughter, then I accidentally met with my husband, and we married from mutual affection. He was a tragedian—that is the way in which I became an actress.

Now I follow the histrionic profession as the only means of living left open to me. I have seen the dangers—nay, I have *felt* them. But nightly, no matter how utterly wearied out with toil I may have been, I have uttered two lines of sincere prayer that God would keep me from falling into deeper sin. And He has kept me! Does that surprise you? God is the God of the publican as well as of the Pharisee. Who dares excommunicate me? What child of the Universal Father shall dare to say that another is excluded from His love, and care, and protection? Verily, the Day of Judgment will be a day of startling revelations; and many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." And then the actress fell into silence, and her fine countenance lost that look of captious self-defence, and settled into meditative earnestness.

Zuleime arose to go. Mrs. Knight took her hand and said gently, "My dear, think over what I have proposed to you. If you decide to accept my proposition, I will take every possible care of you. You shall be as my own daughter. I will shield you from all dangers; I will instruct you in your art; and I will give you the freedom of my wardrobe. Good-night. Will you kiss me?"

And she drew Zuleime to her bosom. The poor girl pressed her lips to those of the actress, and, slipping through the door, passed up in the dark and cold to her own room.

Ida went to bed, but the poor, generous, irritable woman could not sleep for sympathy, for anxiety, and for the sound of Zuleime's racking cough. "She will never be able to sing much, I am really afraid; but she shall be paid well for dressing, and for making her beautiful face and form a part of the pageantry—that I am determined upon, if I have any influence with the management," thought Ida, as she sank to sleep.

Rusty and threadbare clothing, broken shoes, cold, hunger, and a suffering child, are forcible arguments, and they seconded the persuasions of Ida with tremendous power.

Zuleime yielded, and was carried down the current of fate as easily, with as little resistance, as the sapling beaten down by the rain, uprooted by the wind, and carried off by the flood, is whirled down the stream.

It was the fatal night of the 26th of December, 1811, the night of the burning of the Richmond Theatre—a night

ever to be remembered in the annals of that city, and ever to be mourned in the hearts of her citizens. That evening, more than six hundred lovers of pleasure were gaily preparing for the theatre, not dreaming, alas! that they also were doomed to take fearful part in an awful tragedy—a tragedy unprecedented in the history of the stage. Before eight o'clock, more than six hundred persons, from pleasant city homes all around, assembled in the fated building; before twelve o'clock, more than one hundred had perished horribly in the flames! and the scarcely-surviving five hundred, many wounded, maimed, or burned, all despairingly mourning the awful fate of nearest relatives and friends, returned or were borne back to their desolate homes!

That afternoon, unprophetic of doom as any of the others, Zuleime and her friend were preparing to go on the stage. Zuleime had no part to perform—she was as yet only an *attachée*, and was to appear but in one scene, as one of a group of villagers. She was engaged in fixing up a peasant dress, consisting of a straw hat, black spencer, short grey skirt, and striped stockings. Mrs. Knight was, as usual, doing two things at once—arranging her costume and studying her part; but the eyes of Ida often wandered towards Zuleime, as she heard that hacking, racking cough, and she noticed with pain the waning face. Yes! within a few days even, the thin face had become perceptibly thinner, and the flushed cheek burned with a darker crimson. "And she will make a sorry-looking peasant," thought Ida; "a very sorry peasant, with that delicate, spiritual, almost aërial face and form of hers. How absurdly inappropriate are most of the affairs we get up! Truly, our art is in the rear of all others. Now, this evening, all go on as villagers—vulgar and refined—all reduced to one level. Those coarse, brawny Miss Butchers, and this fragile, delicate Zuleime, all peasants—very well for the Miss Butchers, but for Zuleime! Tomorrow evening all go on as fairies—excellent well for this aërial Zuleime, but for the Miss Butchers! Well, our notions are fanciful as arbitrary; and there may be peasants who have delicate, white, semi-transparent fingers, and there may be fairies with large, flat feet, and great red hands, for aught we know." While Mrs. Knight silently cogitated, and covered her white satin shoes anew, and studied her part, Zuleime worked on also in silence, but too despairing, too

exhausted, even to think of the wayward fate which had brought her to this pass.

At about sunset their preparations were completed. Ida, as usual, rang for her cup of coffee and her errand-boy, and packed up and sent away the costume for the evening. Then she put her own little girl and Zuleime's child to sleep together in her bed, and got Bertha to promise to look in, in the course of the evening, and see that all was safe; and then poor Ida carefully wrapped Zuleime up in her own mantilla, and wound her own furs around her neck, saying in answer to all expostulation, "Never mind *me*, my dear; I've got no cough. Haggard as I look, I'm whit-leather! *You* must take care of your poor little self."

And then they left the house, walking briskly through the biting air, and crunching the crusted snow under their quick footsteps. Though but little after sunset, owing to the heavy clouds, it was almost dark when they hurried along the streets. There was the usual number of foot-passengers abroad; and once, as the slight figure of a man in a military cloak swiftly hurried past, Mrs. Knight felt her arm suddenly grasped with spasmodic force by her companion, and, turning round, she saw the face of Zuleime deadly pale.

"Why, what is the matter, my dear child?"

"Nothing, nothing!" said Zuleime; "let us hurry on."

"But you are trembling like an aspen-leaf; you have walked too far—you are not strong enough for this evening's work; let me take you home again."

"No, no, no! let's go on!"

"Why, Zuleime—"

"Oh, it is nothing—nothing when you hear it! I—I felt the presence of one long dead! It was weak nerves, or fancy, or perhaps the prescience of one on the confines of the unseen world. Let us hasten on."

They hurried along. In the meantime, he who had passed them, the slight man in the military cloak, walked on down the square, suddenly stopped, muttered to himself, "Absurd! impossible!" then went on again, again stopped, as by an irresistible impulse, turned and rapidly retraced his steps after the two ladies in black, overtook them, was close behind them; but not placing any confidence in what he termed his own wild thoughts, he dared not accost or peep under the bonnets of two reserved and closely-veiled women. But he

kept them in sight until he saw them enter the side-door of the theatre. Then he asked a door-keeper, "Who are those?"

"Two of the ladies attached to the theatre," replied the man.

"Fool that I was!" exclaimed Frank Fairfax, as he turned away.

Captain Fairfax had reached Richmond that day at noon—too late, by half a day, for the stage to L——, whither he would have gone, if possible, on the wings of the wind. His mother, warned by the newspapers, had been daily expecting his arrival, and was prepared to receive him when he presented himself. He had spent the whole afternoon with her at Fairview House, and in the evening had walked out to book his place in the next day's stage for L——. It was when hurrying along on that errand that he passed so near his wife, electrifying her with his unknown presence, and being himself drawn to follow, and to hover near her all the evening; for when he had turned from the theatre, and hurried on and reached the stage-office and secured his place, finding out that the coach did not start till three o'clock the next morning, he said to himself, "How on earth shall I contrive to forget some of these miserable hours that must intervene before I can fly to my wife? My mother's ill-health obliges her to retire early to bed. If I go back to Fairview House, I shall have the whole mansion to myself. I will even go to the theatre, and see if I can find out among the women there the particular one whose air and gait reminded me so strongly of my Zuleime."

And so to the theatre he went. It was quite early, and he was fortunate in securing a seat in the centre of the first row of boxes, immediately in front of the stage. In the meantime, Zuleime had been conducted by Mrs. Knight into the theatre, and introduced into the common dressing-room of the stock actresses. This was a large room, with a broad shelf or dresser running around three sides of the walls, and about four feet from the floor. This served as bureaus, dressing-tables, and wash-stands for nine women, each of the three sides being occupied by three, who equally divided the shelf, each one having her band-boxes under the shelf, and her looking-glass on top of it, leaning against the wall, and her wash-basin, jars of rouge, boxes of powder, pots of pomatum, &c., standing around it. On introducing her

companion into this apartment, Mrs. Knight said, "All women belonging to the theatre use this as a common dressing-room, except the ballet-girls, who have one to themselves, and the stars, who have separate and well-furnished rooms."

About half-a-dozen women were present now, each before her own glass, with her own tallow candle, making her toilet.

"Who's that, Knight, that you've got there?" asked a coarse-featured, black-eyed girl, who always played the hoyden or the wit, and fondly believed herself a proficient in the Rosalind and Beatrice line. "I say, Knight, is that the young 'lady?'" she repeated, turning round, with a little wad of raw cotton, dipped in carmine, between her finger and thumb, and exhibiting a face in process of being rejuvenated—namely, with one young and blooming cheek, and one prematurely old and sallow.

"Yes, this is the young lady, Barry," said Mrs. Knight very gravely, as she led her *protégée* off to her own corner of the common dresser.

"I think she might have sent her down with the ballet-girls, as she is really one of them," grumbled a large, important-looking female, arranging a huge turban and curls upon her head, at the farther end of the room. Two new ideas, besides that of the common dressing-room, and the dressing-shelf in general, Zuleime had got—namely, first, that there really was some very lofty notions of rank and exclusiveness even among the members of the stock company of a second-rate theatre—secondly, that they really, after all, did not differ much in that or any other respect from people she had met in very high society, except, indeed, that they had the odious habit of calling each other "Knight" or "Barry," as men do, without a prefix of any sort.

Mrs. Knight dressed herself for her part, as she was to appear in the early scene in the play, and then gave the use of her toilet nook to Zuleime. But the cold walk through the evening air, and the standing in the chilly dressing-room, had so increased her cough, that Mrs. Knight went out and sent a call-boy for opium, and administered a dose; it was under the influence of that stupifier that Zuleime, leaning on the arm of Mrs. Knight, entered that *terra incognita*, the green-room. It was a long room, papered, curtained, carpeted, furnished with sofas and easy-chairs, and warmed by

a fine coal fire: upon the whole, it differed in no other respect than its motley crowd from a large family parlour. Mrs. Knight conducted her to a corner of the sofa nearest the fire, and, leaving her sitting there, obeyed the call-boy's summons, and went upon the stage. Composed into a dreamy state by the opium, Zuleime sat there while the strange scene, with its fantastical crowd, passed before her like the phantasmagoria of a midnight dream. And all this time Frank sat in the centre box of the front row, not seeing the play enacting before him—not thinking of it—only seeing the turnpike road to L——. Only thinking of the dearest girl in the world, whom he should meet at the end of his journey. Paper walls again!

Zuleime remained in the corner of the sofa near the fire in the green-room, not thinking at all, not even dreaming, only conscious in a vague dreamy way that a strange vision, changing and changing like figures in the kaleidoscope, was passing before her. She was scarcely aroused by Mrs. Knight's gentle voice, saying in her ear, "Come, my dear, it is time for you to go on now. Come, don't be afraid! Bless you, you are nobody, you know. No one will look at you. You will be only one of a group that forms a sort of background to the scene. Come, I will go with you to the side-entrance, where the others stand."

Zuleime obeyed mechanically, and was led, between various walls of canvas, to a side-entrance, at which were grouped a number of persons in villagers' costume.

"There, just go on with the crowd, and stand there; that is all you have to do," whispered Mrs. Knight, as she left her.

And at the same moment the group moved on, carrying the somnolent Zuleime with them, and she found herself in a dazzling glare of light, and heard the deafening rant of a stentor-lunged actor near her, and grew painfully conscious of the many hundred eyes upon the scene—upon herself, perhaps—and dared not raise her eyes an instant from the floor, upon which, with a deeply-burning cheek, they were fixed. But suddenly an attraction, a fatality—I know not what—but something stronger than her fear, stronger than her will, drew her glance up to the centre box of the front row, and her eyes met Frank's eyes. Yes, there he sat gazing at her, astonished, fixed, spell-bound, as by a

nightmare, without the power of moving or waking. She, too, gazed for a moment. She was not astonished at seeing him there, any more than she would have been astonished at *dreaming* of seeing him anywhere; it was all like a wild dream, everything! It seemed not unnatural that he should form a part of it. Only to her weakened and half-stupified brain, the *last, nearest* event was the most distinct—and so, strangely, she did not think of his death or life, but only of the reproach she had brought upon *him*, her proud Frank, in appearing there; and, covering her face with both hands, she sank to her knees upon the floor.

It was lucky the drop-curtain fell just then—it was lucky the audience took that by-scene for a part of the play; but to Zuleime it was still like a fever-dream, from which she tried to wake. Like a dream the drop-curtain had rolled down; but not like a dream was the rough seizure of her arm by a girl who set her upon her feet, and said in a not unfriendly tone—

"What did you do that for? *That* warn't a part of *your* part!"

"I—I—have," began Zuleime, passing her hand back and forth across her forehead, "I have been taking opium to stop my cough. I never was used to it, and I think it has bewildered me a little; don't you think so?"

"I think something has! Wake up and try to listen to what is going on. Mr. —— is going to sing now. Come off."

As the girl led her away between the walls of canvas, one of those insignificant incidents occurred upon which, nevertheless, the fate of hundreds sometimes hang. Away among the back scenes through which they passed to reach the green-room there was a chandelier hanging flaring in the draught. A boy seemed busy with it.

"Hoist it up higher, sir—why don't you?" exclaimed one of the players, who happened to come up.

"If I do, it will set fire to the scenes," replied the boy.

"Confound your insolence! do you think I would give you the order if there were the least danger! Do as you are directed, sir!"

The boy obeyed; and the scenery instantly took fire. The chandelier was hastily drawn down; the alarm was given in the rear of the stage, and a scene-shifter directed to cut the

cords by which the combustible material was suspended, but the man became panic-struck and fled.

The performers and their assistants in vain sought to tear down the scenery. The canvas was covered with a resinous composition, and the draught of wind was strong; and Zuleime and her companion were swiftly encircled by walls of blazing canvas. The strong girl, terror-stricken, left her weak companion and fled; and the poor invalid, forgotten by all in the terror and confusion, sank down overpowered, suffocated by the heat and smoke. All this had happened in less than three minutes from the raising of the chandelier.

And at this time one of the performers was playing near the orchestra; and the greater part of the stage, with its appalling danger, was fatally concealed from the audience by the curtain. The flames spread with the rapidity of lightning; and the first notice the audience had of their danger was the fire falling from the ceiling upon the head of the performer. Even then many supposed it to be a part of the play, and were for a short time restrained from flight by a cry from the stage that there was no danger. But soon the fire flashed in every part of the house with a rapidity horrible and appalling. Then terror seized upon the hearts of all, and the audience broke up in confusion. Those in the pit escaped by the pit entrance, and were every one saved. Those in the boxes, who, had they known it, might at first have escaped by way of the pit, all turned and hurried towards the only door of egress into the lobby. This door was unfortunately hung to open on the inside; and this circumstance was fatally overlooked by the frenzied crowd, who pressed and pressed against the door, trying to push it open, but really keeping it fast closed. The fire advanced upon them, filling the house with suffocating smoke, and with flame that seized the clothing of those behind, goading them horribly to still more frantic pressure upon those before. The most frightful uproar ensued; women shrieking, praying; men groaning, expostulating; all crowding one upon another, or rather hundreds upon hundreds, and all pressing towards the door that would not yield. The pit was now a lake of fire, darting out huge tongues of flame that wound themselves around the forms of the hindmost, who fell shrivelled into the blaze; then arose cries of horror, anguish and despair—children crying for lost parents, and parents

calling in agony upon the names of missing children—for in the fierce pushing and struggling for life, parties got separated and families divided, children forced from the parents, women from their protectors, and the weaker unconsciously thrown down and trampled to death by the strong. Many, half roasted, dropped into the burning pit; many, with their garments in flames, maddened by pain and terror, threw themselves headlong from the windows, and met another death; many even chanced to save their lives in that way at the cost of broken limbs; and at last the door yielded, and as many as possible escaped that way; but to what a life, alas! darkened for ever by the memory of dearest relatives and friends who perished in the fire. The whole building was now in flames; in less than an hour all was over; naught remained but a heap of smoking ruins; and around them the agonised crowd of those who lived and raved, and around these again an awe-struck, mourning city.

CHAPTER XXV.

"IN PALACE CHAMBERS."

The spell that bound Captain Fairfax when he recognised his wife upon the stage was broken by the fall of the drop-curtain. He instantly left the boxes and hastened round behind the scenes. After many baffled inquiries, and many misdirections, he prosecuted his search alone, and at length found her prostrate form: the wind had blown the smoke and flame in another direction, and she lay there uninjured, though insensible, and in extremity of danger. He raised her, threw his cloak round her, and ran with her into the fresh air, called a hackney-coach, placed her in it, jumped in and took his seat by her side, drew her insensible form within his arms upon his bosom, and directed the coachman to drive rapidly to Fairview House. As they passed swiftly through the streets, the cry of "Fire! fire! fire!" rang through the air, but he scarcely heard it; the rushing of crowds of people in the opposite direction to that in which they were driving frequently impeded the progress of the carriage, but he scarcely knew it; all his senses, all his thoughts, all his emotions

were absorbed in the gentle form that lay swooning on his bosom; and, "Oh, how *thin* she is! how *thin*, good Heaven!" he groaned many times, as he held his arm around the fragile waist, or felt the emaciated arm and hand, or pressed his cheek against the wan face. "How thin she is, good Heaven! how thin! Is this illness? Illness unto death, perhaps! Drive fast, coachman—fast!" He longed to lay her at rest upon her bed, that he might perchance silence his anxiety; and, "Faster, coachman! faster!" he continued to cry, whenever the thickening crowd arrested the progress of the carriage.

At length they reached Fairview House. He lifted her out and bore her into the hall. His mother had retired to rest long since; but he rang the bell violently, and said to the astonished servants who came at the summons, "Go instantly and prepare a room for my wife. I have but just saved her from the burning theatre!" The wonder-struck maids hurried to obey. "Stop! Don't disturb your mistress, on your lives," he said, and, with this warning, dismissed them. To one of the men present, he exclaimed, "Run instantly to Doctor Cummings, and ask him to hurry hither."

The man disappeared to obey; and, during the issuing of these orders, Frank Fairfax was sitting on the sofa, sustaining the fainting form of his wife with one arm, while with the other hand he unlaced the velvet bodice. Presently one of the maids returned and announced that the room was ready; and Frank raised and carried his precious burden up stairs, into a pleasant front chamber, and laid her on a bed; then, with the assistance of one of the women, he got off the stage-dress, and supplied its place with one of his mother's white wrappers, brought for the purpose by one of the maids.

He had scarcely done this, when the chamber-door opened, and old Mrs. Fairfax entered, roused up by the noise in and outside the house. She came in, wrapped in a flannel dressing-gown, and saying anxiously, "My dear Frank, they tell me that the Richmond Theatre is on fire. I am so grateful that you are not there. Ah! what is this? Who is that?" she asked, perceiving the form of Zuleime upon the bed, and advancing towards it. "Some sufferer you have saved from the fire, my dear Frank? God bless your

brave, kind heart, my dear boy! but you should not have brought her in here, or you should not be here yourself. Retire, and leave the lady to the care of myself and my women," concluded the lady gravely.

"My dearest mother, yes! She is a sufferer I have saved from the fire—a most beloved sufferer! my wife, my wife! Dearest mother, I cannot leave her! I have a *right* to stay here."

Here followed a wild, hasty disclosure of his imprudent marriage, kept secret up to that moment; and then, amid the grief and surprise of Mrs. Fairfax, he also learned the fact of Mr. Clifton's death, and of Zuleime's disappearance and suspected suicide. In bitter self-reproach Frank had made his confession—in deepest sorrow he heard his mother's revelations.

"How much she must have suffered! Good Heaven! how much she must have suffered!" he exclaimed. Then almost madly he cried, "Mother, look at her! look at her! Oh, tell me, do you think she can live?"

Mrs. Fairfax had been all this time chafing her temples with cologne, while the two maids rubbed her hands and feet; but up to this instant she had given no signs of recovery or of consciousness; and the old lady shook her head mournfully, and plunged Frank into deeper despair. They persevered in their efforts for half an hour longer, and then she sighed and opened her eyes. Her husband was bending over her. She met his eyes, and smiled faintly in recognition, without astonishment and without joy—indeed, she was too feeble for either; and murmuring, "Dearest Frank," she sank away again, fainting, they supposed, until her low breathing revealed that she slept the sleep of utter prostration. And how changed was now that countenance! The look of weariness, care, and sorrow had vanished, and the sweet, wan face wore the easy, confiding air of infancy; and, even in sleep, she must have felt the shelter of protecting love around her, for often with closed eyes she smiled, as in delighted visions. All night they watched beside her bed while she slept. In the morning the doctor arrived. He had been absent all night, by the couch of one who had been severely burned at the theatre, and that accounted for his failure to come before morning; now, however, he stood beside the patient with grave and thoughtful brow.

"Doctor, for Heaven's sake, give me some hope of her! Tell me something about her, at least! Is she ill?"

"She is very ill," replied the physician.

"I cannot believe it! I will not believe it! See how sweetly she sleeps! how comfortably! how free from suffering!"

"Yes; but, my dear Captain Fairfax, there would be more hope if there were more suffering. However, the case may be much more favourable than it appears to me now; I cannot fully judge of it until she wakes."

"Allow me to arouse her, then. Nay, I wish to do it. I have not spoken to her yet. Let me wake her now."

"By no means. It might prove fatal. Indeed, you must be very careful; her life hangs by a thread. Sleep will do her more good now than anything else. When she awakes naturally, you may send for me at once." And, so saying, the doctor took leave, without even writing a prescription.

Soon after he left the house she opened her eyes again, and, seeing Frank, smiled faintly, and murmured, "My own —my dearest, dearest husband!" and in an instant her senses seemed swallowed up again in sleep, which lasted half an hour, at the end of which she awoke again, and looked around in uneasiness, and breathed half aloud, "My child—my baby—my little Fan—" and then sank away again, as if she were too feeble to retain her hold on consciousness.

"What is she talking about, dear mother?" inquired Frank, in the extremity of anxiety, when he heard her words.

Mrs. Fairfax shook her head, and said she did not know; but the woman who waited in the chamber came forward, and said that, if her mistress would excuse her interfering, *she* would tell them what the young lady meant.

"Speak on, then, at once, in the name of the Lord!" exclaimed Frank impatiently.

Mrs. Fairfax indorsed his order; and then the woman informed her mistress that she had known the sick young lady all the winter, by sight—that she had been there at the house to ask for sewing—that she took in sewing for a living—that she lodged at the cabinet-maker's, over the way—and that she had a little girl almost two years old, who was no doubt at the cabinet-maker's now, which she

supposed was what had made the mother look around, and inquire so anxiously.

The woman's story was scarcely over before Captain Fairfax seized his hat, and hurried from the room. As soon as he was gone, Mrs. Fairfax called the woman up before her, and said, "Nelly, you heard your master tell me of his marriage with this young lady?"

"Yes, madam."

"I need not tell you that it is my will that there be no kitchen gossip about this matter. This young lady, once Miss Zuleime Clifton, is now, and has been for nearly three years past, Mrs. Francis Fairfax, the wife of my son, and is also your own young mistress. You understand?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then let there be no idle conversation about this marriage, if you would avoid my severest displeasure."

Farther colloquy was arrested by the hurried entrance of Captain Fairfax, bringing his little wee girl in his arms. Mrs. Fairfax immediately arose to take her from him; but the child's quick eyes had recognised her mother lying on the bed, and she began to clap her hands and call, "Mamma, mamma!"

Frank held her closely, and tried to still her joyful, eager cries; but the magical sound of her child's voice had already awakened the sleeper, and she opened her eyes, and, seeing the babe in its father's arms, smiled a feeble smile of content, and fell away again into oblivion.

Mrs. Fairfax had the doctor summoned again, and told him that, if he wished to see her daughter-in-law awake, he must remain at her bedside, for that she only awoke to relapse instantly into slumber.

The physician then took his seat by the bedside of his patient, and requested all except a maid-servant to leave the chamber.

Mrs. Fairfax and Frank went out, taking the little girl with them, and leaving the doctor with the invalid.

After the lapse of an hour, the physician came out and went down stairs. Captain Fairfax was waiting for him in the hall, and drew him into the parlour, anxiously requesting to know his opinion. Perhaps he was really sanguine, and hoped the doctor's verdict might set his fears at rest. At any rate, he insisted upon knowing the precise state of the

case. The doctor gravely motioned him to sit down, and then took a seat himself. He said that his patient was not sinking so much under any local disease as under a general atrophy, for which, considering *the circumstances*, he could not possibly account; for, if he had met precisely such a case in the very lowest walks of life, he should at once have declared that the patient had been brought to this state by the want of proper and sufficient food; that, in short, she was dying of a slow starvation. A deep groan broke from the lips of Francis Fairfax, and he started up, covered his face with his hands, and walked the floor in rapid strides. Suddenly he stopped before the physician, with a countenance convulsed with grief and remorse, with all pride and hesitation gone, and exclaimed in thrilling tones, "Doctor, suppose her case, my wife's case, had been as you would have surmised, finding it anywhere else; suppose that for months past she had been starving—Great God! *starving!*—now that the cause of this utter failure of the vital powers is removed—now that she has everything that wealth, that the most devoted affection can give her, may she not recruit and live? Oh, tell me!"

The physician answered sternly, "I do not know, sir. This tampering with the laws of life, this pursuing it to the very edge of death, is not safe. Is she inclined to take food at all?"

"No; only a little gruel, and that mechanically, without appetite."

"Exactly—a few days' fasting makes one ravenous; but a long, partial starvation so exhausts the victim that he loses all inclination for food, as well as all power to assimilate it." The doctor spoke severely.

"Sir, I forgive your sternness and your evident suspicions; perhaps they are partially just. If they were otherwise, God knows I am so stricken that I have scarcely manhood enough left to resent them; but, oh! tell me—do not evade the question—can she be restored, and how?"

"Captain Fairfax, I told you that she was sinking, not so much under any local disorder as under general atrophy; and yet she *has* a local disease, superinduced by this same slow starvation. Upon examination by the stethoscope, I find tubercles forming upon the left lung. There is also morbid action of the heart. You know how it is with

phthisis. With proper care, and under favourable circumstances, the patient may live for years, perhaps for many years, and die at length, in old age, of something else."

"Oh, *no* care, *no* pains—nothing that money, nothing that love can do, shall be wanting! There is hope?"

"I dare not say there is *much* hope in this instance. This atrophy is a very unfavourable thing; all our hope is in being able to save the digestive functions. I have left a prescription, with written directions, above stairs." The doctor took his hat, and, saying that he would see the invalid again in the afternoon, departed.

"All alike, all alike! They sway from right to left, raising one's hopes, and then rousing their fears. He lies! he lies! It is not so; she is in no danger! Great God! she must not die! she shall not!" So unjustly, wildly, sinfully Frank Fairfax talked, walking distractedly up and down the floor, convulsed by grief, remorse, and fear for her he loved so strongly, and felt he had wronged so greatly. He dared not seek her bedside now in his excited state; he rushed into his library, locked the door, and gave himself up to all the power of remorse.

In the afternoon he sought the sick-room again; and the deep, sweet peace that pervaded the apartment fell like a soothing spell upon his excited nerves. The front windows were open, for the day was very fine, and the fresh air and the sunshine came in together, with the cheerful view of the expanse of water, and the wooded hills across James's River. The coolness of the air was sufficiently tempered by a glowing coal-fire in the grate. Zuleime lay, raised up with pillows, on the bed, and upon the counterpane by her sat her little girl. The face of the youthful mother seemed as soft, as feeble, and as free of care and sorrow as that of the infant herself. On seeing Frank enter, she smiled a gentle, pleased, childish smile, and feebly moved her hand towards him. He went to her, at first successfully repressing all his strong emotions, and kissed her very gently, but then sank upon his knees, and, dropping his face upon her hand, burst into tears, and wept passionately. Her other hand wandered playfully through his curls, and she said gently, "Don't weep, Frank, please don't! Indeed, I am happy—it is so nice to be here—don't weep."

But when men weep and sob, it is no passing shower, like

the easily-shed tears of women, but a great gust, shaking all the nature; so it was a long time before Frank mastered his emotion. When he recovered his composure, and arose and sat by her side and looked at her, he found that the hectic fever burned crimson on her cheeks, and that her brilliant eyes wandered about deliriously; and he knew that he had harmed her again; and soon she began to talk at random, babbling childishly, delightfully, about White Cliffs, and the forest-walks, and the garden; and she addressed her father and sister as if they were present; and very lovingly she spoke to Catherine; or, coming nearer to the present moment, talked with Ida about her feminine shrinking from appearing upon the stage. Frank listened in the deepest trouble; and, in the wandering of her mind, he learned much that had transpired at White Cliffs, a great deal that had occurred since her flight thence, and *all* that he ought to have known.

When the physician arrived in the evening, he instituted strict inquiries, and discovered the cause of her high fever; then he rebuked the indiscretion of her friends, and leaving fresh prescriptions, with peremptory orders that the deepest quiet should be preserved, departed. Her fever, unabated, raged all night; in the morning it went off.

Captain Fairfax would not permit himself to enter her room again until he had obtained the power of perfect self-control; at about eleven o'clock he went in. The crimson curtains of the windows were drawn aside, and the room was light and cheerful; the white muslin drapery of the bedstead was festooned, and revealed the fair invalid reclining there, wan, placid, and child-like as ever. She welcomed her husband with the same soft, faint smile; and he went and sat by her side, and, crushing down all strong emotions, took her hand, and spoke to her calmly and pleasantly, inquiring how she felt.

"So well!—it is so nice to be here!" she answered simply; and she lay there looking at him contentedly, smiling softly, answering vaguely when he spoke to her, but never asking any question, or making any comment, or volunteering any speech whatever. This pained him more than all, for he knew that mind as well as body was sinking—lapsing away into a sort of dreamy, happy futuity; and all attempts to rouse her from that state only threw her into fever, and often into delirium.

One day, with a view to interest without exciting her, he inquired, "Dearest, is there anyone you would like to see?"

"Yes—Ida," she said.

"And who is Ida, love?" asked Frank very cautiously and gently, for he felt as if he were running the risk of hurting her again.

"Ida! La! don't you know? She was so good to me," she replied, with a pitying smile.

Captain Fairfax left the room, and at a venture went over to inquire at the cabinet-maker's; and he soon returned, accompanied by Mrs. Knight. Zuleime received her visitor without any emotion whatever—smiling gently, and holding out her hand, and afterwards lying and silently and pleasantly watching her as she sat by the bed; and when she rose to take leave, she put up her lips for a kiss. Poor Ida pressed those lips very gently, and then quietly left the room; but, as soon as she had passed the door, burst into tears.

Every day Zuleime's mind flowed away; every day she became more infantile in weakness and simplicity. One day she made known a wish—the only one she had ever voluntarily expressed; it was affecting from its utter childishness.

"Dear Frank, you and your mother are rich. I want you to bring Ida and her child home to live here, so that she may not have to go on the stage any more." She reverted to this subject so frequently, repeating this, the only wish she had ever expressed, so often and earnestly, that her husband felt strongly inclined to gratify her desire, strange as it really was. He consulted his mother, and they concluded that it might be done in a measure; then they told her that it should be as she wished—that Ida and her child should come and live with them, if she would. Captain Fairfax went again to the cabinet-maker's, saw the poor actress, and told her that his wife needed a female companion to sit with her a portion of the day, and that she would hear of no one for the post but her old friend Mrs. Knight—if Mrs. Knight would come and name her own salary; and when he had let slip that last word, he turned away his face, with his forehead burning under the astonished, indignant gaze of those proud, dark eyes of Ida's, as she said, "Captain Fairfax, I receive a 'salary' in the regular line of my profession, when I am engaged in it, as Captain Fairfax also receives pay for his military services; but as he would spurn all offers of pecu-

niary remuneration for attentions to a wounded comrade, so should I decline all compensation for attentions to a sick neighbour; and I am most surprised that you should have made such a proposal to me."

So was Captain Fairfax himself really surprised that he should have been betrayed into such an error, as to forget that the very profession of the poor tragic actress really fostered a morbid pride. Her phrases might have been a little stilted, after the manner of the stage, but the sentiments were really true and high, and worthy of all consideration. So Captain Fairfax apologised, as he best could, and arose to take his leave; then she said, "Do not quite misunderstand me. I am very anxious to do all in my power to serve Mrs. Fairfax, for I love her dearly! I am willing to devote all my time, night and day, to her service, for the affection I bear her. And I can do it now; for since the burning of the theatre I have been disengaged."

Captain Fairfax replied by expressing his grateful acknowledgments of her kindness, and begging her to come over frequently to see his wife; then he took leave indeed, and returned home, with the determination to ask his mother to invite Mrs. Knight to come and spend a few weeks with her friend at Fairview House. Old Mrs. Fairfax had quite a struggle with her Virginian pride and prejudices before she could make up her mind to ask an actress to become her guest, but benevolence conquered; and as whatever she once resolved upon doing she did graciously and gracefully, she called upon Mrs. Knight, and gave her the invitation in a manner that insured its acceptance. Ida, with her little girl, came over the next day; and the old lady felt fully rewarded for her self-conquest, when she saw the smile of childish delight with which the gentle patient greeted her poor friend.

"See, Ida," murmured Zuleime, as her visitor seated herself at the bedside, "see, Ida, we are both now in the nice house we used to look at so longingly from our poor back windows." She paused from weakness, and then said, "I used to call it my *heaven*, you know! Ah, I did not know it was really *my* heaven. I did not know Frank had ever lived here—how strange!" She paused again, but this time from thought, as well as from exhaustion; and then she took breath, and said again, "I never could make it out clearly, and it makes my head ache to try; but see, dear Ida—look

at the crimson window-curtains; don't you know they are the very same crimson curtains that used to throw the warm, red glow across the snow, when we used to sit at the back window and watch them, and almost envy the people that lived here?"

"Yes, I know; but do not talk too much, darling."

"I won't—but it is so strange. There, look through the windows; you can see our little, narrow, pinched back windows, with their check curtains, as plainly from here as we used to see these from there. We did not think we should ever get here to live, did we? How strange!"

Her talk, rambling as it was, revealed one hopeful fact—that her mind was at length waking up. Frank saw it with joy. Day by day, from this time, her intellect seemed to clear and strengthen. Frank spoke of this to the doctor, who heard him with great gravity, and without comment.

As winter advanced towards spring, her mind "brightened more and more towards the perfect day." She had gleaned, partly from scraps of speech carelessly dropped, and partly by inquiry, the history of Frank's captivity among the Shoshonowas, that first originated the report of his death—she was gradually brought to understand the true position of affairs—so gradually through so many weeks, that the knowledge may be said rather to have slowly grown upon her. But as her mind cleared and strengthened, her heart became saddened and depressed. She understood too much now for her happiness. She no longer lay and watched her husband with a delighted smile as he sat beside her bed; no, but rather with a look of earnest, mournful love. Well she might. Frank was sad enough—he thought his heart was breaking.

One day, while lying propped up by pillows, she heard the name of Mrs. Georgia Clifton mentioned.

"Is she in the city?" inquired she.

"Yes, love," replied her husband.

"Send for her to come and see me—I *must* see her."

Captain Fairfax arose and left the room immediately, and, instead of sending a servant, went himself to bring Mrs. Georgia; for so great was his desire to gratify promptly every wish of his loved one's heart, that he seldom trusted the execution of them to any but himself, lest they should chance to be delayed. It was well in this instance, at least,

that he went in person. A servant could not have effected the purpose. The conscience-stricken Georgia would not have ventured to come. Even when, unannounced, by reason of his haste, Captain Fairfax entered her parlour, the beauty turned deadly pale, under the fear of detected guilt; but when she saw his calm, kind manner, and heard him intreat, as a favour, that she would put on her bonnet immediately, and return with him to see his wife, who was extremely ill at Fairview, the sorceress was re-assured, and, with her usual bewitching grace, consented to accompany him

When they arrived at Fairview House, and were shown up into the sick chamber, the patient smiled, and held out her hands. Georgia hastened towards her, and seized both hands, covering them with kisses, and making a show of great emotion. Zuleime raised her feeble voice and begged all to go out of the room and leave her alone with her visitor; and when everyone had departed, and the door was closed, she said, "Sit down, please, here by my bedside." Mrs. Georgia took the nurse's arm-chair. "Dear Georgia," she said, gently taking both her hands and looking kindly in her face, "I sent for you because I thought you must be so unhappy about what you have unintentionally caused me to suffer; and I wished to tell you not to remember it in bitterness any more. Oh! I grieve so much at the memory of what I have made my dear father suffer, that I can feel for others who are tortured by remorse; and I would not, for the whole world, that anyone should mourn for what they have caused me to suffer. So, dear Georgia, I acquit you of all blame, from the bottom of my heart—indeed, I do; and I pray that God may make you happier than *I* have ever been; and I will never, never drop a hint by which anyone shall suspect—I mean, I will never let fall a word to anyone that shall injure you, Georgia. I would not die and bequeath you so bitter a legacy as an enemy. Though I knew you would not come and ask me, I sent for you to assure you of this, Georgia, and to reconcile myself with you, that we might be friends before I die. And now, God bless you! Kiss me and say good-bye, for my fever is rising."

And she held up her lips. Georgia was weeping.

"Zuleime, my dear child, why don't you call me mamma, as heretofore?" she asked.

"Oh, don't you know long ago you told me not to do it? but I will, if you wish it, now. Kiss me, dear mamma. There, now, go and be at peace."

Georgia hurried from the room. They never met again.

Zuleime revived slightly when the spring opened. She had heard that her sister Carolyn had nearly recovered her health, and was just about to set out on her voyage home; and two secret wishes the poor girl indulged—once more to visit White Cliffs, and to live to see her only sister again; but she kept them to herself in the fear of giving Frank trouble, for she knew that he would try to move heaven and earth to please her, and deeply grieve if he should fail. She concealed her wants, but they were discovered by him who watched day and night to anticipate her wishes; and Captain Fairfax called upon the family physician, and consulted him upon the possibility of taking Zuleime to White Cliffs as soon as the spring weather should be permanently settled. The physician's opinion was highly favourable to his wishes; he said that she might be removed by easy stages to the country, and that, if proper care and attention were bestowed, the journey and the change of air would probably be found very beneficial to her health. Captain Fairfax hastened home to cheer his wife with the news; and she was gladdened by it. She caught both his hands and kissed them, and held them to her face, and, looking at him fondly, said, "Dear Frank! dearest Frank! you try to perform miracles for me!"

The same night, Captain Fairfax wrote to Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain, to go over to White Cliffs and prepare to receive the invalid; and from that day Zuleime revived, and by the first of June was so much better as to be able to be placed in the comfortable family-carriage, in which, sometimes reclining upon downy cushions, sometimes resting upon the bosom of her husband and supported by his arms, she travelled by easy stages to White Cliffs. They reached the end of their journey upon the afternoon of the third day. Mrs. Clifton and Catherine were there to receive them. Zuleime was lifted out of the carriage very much exhausted; yet, as she was gently carried through the yard, her eyes roved gladly over all the dear familiar scene—over mountains, fields, and forests, clothed now in the luxuriant foliage of June—and all her countenance lighted up with joy, and she

exclaimed many times, in tones of profound gratitude, "Thank God! oh, thank God!"

She was carried up stairs and put to bed at once; and Catherine was stationed to watch her slumbers, while Mrs. Clifton remained below to attend to the comfort of the tired travellers. But Zuleime frequently awoke with a joyful start and recollection; and once she put her hand in that of Kate and said, "Dear Kate! blessed Kate! I am so glad to see you again, and so very glad to be *home* again! Sweet Sister of Mercy, will you stay and nurse *me* also? I think you could almost cure me! Sweet, unprofessed nun, will you stay and nurse me, too?"

"Yes, dear Zuleime, I will stay as long as you want me; but shut those tired eyes, love, and go to sleep."

"Yes; seal each eyelid down with a kiss, dear Kate, and then they will stay closed; and hold my hand as I go to sleep—I feel so safe when some one I love holds my hand while I slumber. I feel as if they could keep me in life while I slept; for you must know, dear Kate, that my heart has a morbid action, and some of these days I shall fall asleep lightly as now, but never awake again."

"Dear Zuleime, you must not indulge such fancies."

"They are not fancies; they are realities. I do not deceive myself and trifle with you, Kate. Do not you deceive me or trifle with me either. There are secrets of life and death known only to the dying; such a secret is mine. I know that I shall lightly drop asleep some day, and never wake again—that is the reason I wish some one I love to kiss my eyelids down, and to hold my hand while I slumber."

The words, the manner of the dying girl carried deep conviction to the heart of Catherine; and, "O Zuleime!" she said, "lean upon the failing arm of flesh if you will; but, oh, seek—seek the support of that Almighty arm that can sustain you in life and in death! Seek that!"

"I will—I wish to do it; or rather you, the handmaid of the Lord, shall bear me up in your faithful hands, and lay me within that Arm of Strength. I wished this long ago; but, oh, my dear husband and his good mother, they thought only of restoring me to health, and I could think of nothing but of trying to live for them, until very lately, when it was revealed to me that I should surely die. I have never yet told Frank anything about this. I feared it would distress

him too much; but the lone knowledge troubled me. I needed to tell some one of it—some dear one with whom I could converse confidentially, and who should be wise enough to counsel me, patient enough to bear with me, courageous enough to face the result, and who, besides, would not be too greatly distressed, as my dear husband would; and so, sweet Kate, I have told you. Will you now stay with me and nurse me?"

"Yes, dear Zuleime, as long as you wish me to do so; but now, darling, if I am to be your nurse, you must mind what I have to say to you, and go to sleep." Catherine bent over her, and kissed her eyelids down upon the weary eyes, and held her hand until she fell asleep. At night, Captain Fairfax relieved her watch.

The next morning when Catherine entered the room she sat down by the side of the bed, and told her that she had good news to tell—that they had received a letter from Major Clifton, that Carolyn's health was improving, and that they had embarked, or had purposed to embark, upon the first of May, and expected to reach home as soon as the middle of June. Zuleime clasped her hands in fervent thanksgiving while she listened; and when her friend ceased to speak, she exclaimed, "In two weeks she will be here: oh that I may live to see it!"

Kate bade her be of good cheer and hope; and when Catherine told any one to hope, her words, and looks, and manner all inspired the feeling. Zuleime was so recovered and enlivened as to be able to be lifted from her bed and placed in the easy-chair by the open window that looked out upon the mountain scenery, all glorious in the light of summer morning. Old Mrs. Fairfax, and Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain, came in to pay her a visit, bringing her little girl with them. As for Captain Fairfax, he seldom left her side. All congratulated the invalid upon her improved health and spirits, and hoped and foretold great results from her residence in the country, and projected many pleasant drives, when she should be a little rested from the fatigue of her journey. Then they talked of Major Clifton and Carolyn's expected arrival, and laid out extensive plans of amusement to be put in execution when they should come, by which time Zuleime also would be considerably restored. Thus cheerfully, hopefully they talked. And the

dying one listened sweetly; but when she found herself alone again with Kate, she said, "I let them talk, Catherine; for if they *really* have any hopes of my recovery, I do not wish to destroy those hopes by telling what I know; and if they only talk so to cheer me, why even then I do not like to make them sad by not seeming to believe them. And yet, and yet, perhaps, I ought to tell Frank; perhaps I will."

Catherine devoted herself to the service of the invalid, labouring zealously for her spiritual as for her bodily good; indeed, the girl glided into the performance of such duties as naturally as if she felt herself especially called to the work, born for the work. The selfish wish for her own comfort and pleasure had never been very strong in the heart of Catherine; and within the last two years it seemed to have expired. She lived only for the good of others. She had grown to believe that there was no individual happiness for herself, except in the service of others. Young hope had died out in her heart; she was resigned. She adopted the submissive words of Mary and her son, and said within her heart, in deepest sincerity, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" "Not my will, but thine, O God!"

Zuleime was lifted from the bed to the easy-chair every morning, and calmly and profoundly the invalid enjoyed those glorious summer mornings; but she was failing very fast. She grew very anxious for the coming of her sister; but, unwilling to disturb anyone by her anxiety, she confided it only to Kate. They had not heard from Major Clifton since the letter announcing his expected embarkation. They justly supposed him to be on his voyage home, accompanied by Carolyn, and were now daily looking for a letter announcing their landing and their speedy arrival home. The middle of June passed, and no letter had come. The first of July arrived, but brought no news of the voyagers.

"Oh, if they had come when they promised, they might have seen me before I died; but I cannot hold out much longer, Kate. I feel as if the longing to meet Carolyn again had kept me up as by the excitement of expectation; but, Kate, I feel very weary, very much inclined to droop, yet know, if I should give way, I should drop into the arms of Death. I wish they would come. I want to see Carolyn; I want to see her happiness with my own eyes; and then it is not for myself—for, if I die before she comes, Carolyn will

take it very much to heart to know that her poor little sister had been found and had died so inopportunely, just before she had got home. I wish they would come."

The second week in July arrived, with three days of cloud, and rain, and gloom. Zuleime could not leave her bed for her favourite seat at the window, but Catherine served her with more love and zeal than ever. The family had as yet received no news of the travellers; and though they daily grew more anxious, there was no foreboding in their anxiety. Sea-voyages at that day were of such uncertain length; all was no doubt well.

But on the evening of the second rainy day, while Captain Fairfax and Catherine sat with Zuleime, and all the other members of the family were assembled in the summer-saloon, the door of the latter was quietly opened, and Major Clifton stood before the astonished circle. His mother advanced to meet and welcome him. Then she noticed, and they all noticed, that he was clothed in deep mourning. That told the tale! They welcomed him with affectionate sympathy, but no one asked a question; nor did he as yet volunteer a word of his sorrow's history. It was only the next day that his mother learned from him how deceptive was the seeming convalescence of his wife; how from the day of their embarkation her strength declined; how for weeks their hearts fluctuated between hope and fear, as with the changes of her flattering disease she seemed better or worse; how, when all thought of life was gone, but one earthly hope possessed her soul—to die *at home;* of the waning of that last hope; of the death at sea; and, finally, of the lone grave in the ocean isle, where slept the mortal remains of the haughtiest beauty that ever trod the halls of a palace.

They would willingly have concealed the fact of her sister's decease from the dying girl; no one ventured to tell her of the event—they fondly believed that she remained in ignorance of it; but she knew it all from what she saw and heard. She knew that Major Clifton had returned alone, and she surmised the rest from the sad and tearful faces of all around her. Yes, she knew it all, as well as any could have made her know it; and, in the tender thoughtfulness of her soul, she would not distress any by asking them questions relating to the last moment. But from this hour she sank rapidly: she could no longer be lifted from her bed without

fainting. In deep trouble, Captain Fairfax summoned the old family physician. When he came and saw the patient, his opinion was decidedly formed and truthfully given: he said that the Richmond physician had evidently abandoned the case as hopeless when he sent her home to die; that her life had probably been prolonged by her residence in the country, but that nothing could have saved her, and that she had now not many days to live. Captain Fairfax was almost mad with grief, and all the self-possession and self-control that he had learned in the long attendance upon her sick-bed well-nigh deserted him. It was many hours before he was sufficiently composed to take his usual place by her bedside, and then his agonised countenance betrayed the extent of his suffering. Catherine was sitting by her when he entered. Zuleime raised her dying eyes, and, looking at him tenderly, beckoned him to approach; then she motioned Catherine to leave her. When they were alone, she laid her hand within his own, and, looking at him with unutterable love, said, "Dear Frank, dearest Frank, I see that you know it all at last. Dearest Frank, I have known it a long time. Now let us talk freely and confidentially about it; let there be no more of that painful mist between us as when you thought only of my restoration to health, and I knew I was sinking fast into the grave." She paused a moment, and then said, "I want so much to comfort you. I have something to say to you."

His fingers closed upon her hand convulsively. He choked down his strong, rising emotion, and said, "Do not try to talk, love; the effort will exhaust your strength."

"No—no, it will not. I am not so weak as I was when you came in. Dearest Frank, when you sit by me, and hold my hand, new life seems to run up my feeble veins, and I feel stronger. Let me talk, love. Ah, do not look so sad! It is better as it is, love. It is better I should go. I have spoiled my own life, and should spoil yours if I should live. Ah, it is a dreadful thing to occasion the death of any one! it is an awful thing to cause the death of a father! I caused the death of the most loving father that ever lived; and, dearest Frank, though in the struggle, in the bitterness of poverty, in the pangs of hunger and of cold, and in the pain and debility of illness, the feeling of compunction has been diverted, yet, had health returned with prosperity, remorse

would then have darkened all my life; and in ruining my happiness would have marred yours. Yes! I have spoiled my own life. It is well that I should not live to spoil yours, dearest Frank! I talk not of expiation *now*. Nothing that I could do or suffer would alter the irrevocable past. We have all one Redeemer—Jesus Christ, the Righteous. So I talk not of expiating the past; though, perhaps, if any heart is hardened against me, my early death may soften it. But let me speak of the future—*your* future, dearest Frank; and let me say it is better for all your coming years that I should die."

"Oh, do not say so, Zuleime—you break my heart!"

"Dear Frank, you will grieve for me, I know you will; but be comforted. You are so young yet. This sorrow will pass like a morning cloud, and leave all your life a long bright day." She paused abruptly—a grey shadow swept darkly over her face and vanished. *He* did not see it; his face was buried in his hands. Then she asked to have her child brought to her. Frank went out, but soon returned to say that little Fan had been put to bed; and to ask her if the child should be woke up. "No, do not wake the poor little thing," she said; and then added, "I am very, very sleepy, Frank. Dearest Frank, kiss my eyelids down to slumber like you always do, and hold my hand till I fall asleep. Kiss my lips, too, this time; kiss them last of all—there—good-night, love!" Her voice sank away in a low, inaudible murmur, like a dying sound on the Æolian harp.

Her husband sat and held her hand, never moving, scarcely breathing, lest he should disturb her long, deep sleep. He sat there more than an hour. The room grew dark with the shades of evening; and when at length Catherine entered with the night-lamp, he raised his hand with a sign of silence and caution, murmuring, "She has fallen asleep." Catherine approached quietly, shading the lamp with her hand, and looked upon the sleeper. "Hush, be very cautious—do not disturb her," whispered Frank.

The sweet and solemn voice of Catherine gently arose, saying, "Come away, Captain Fairfax. Nothing will ever disturb her more. She has fallen asleep in Jesus!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

GEORGIA.

Two months have passed since the death of the sisters. To the consternation of the *haut ton* of the city, the beautiful Mrs. Clifton has left Richmond and come down to mourn with those that mourn at White Cliffs. With an air at once of earnest conviction and graceful weariness, she says that it is "all vanity and vexation of spirit," meaning fashionable society, spring travelling, and sight-seeing; summers at watering-places, among the mountains, or by the sea-side; winters in town, with plays, concerts, balls, dressing, visiting, and waltzing; autumn parties in the country-houses, with equestrian expeditions, sailing excursions, and forest rides and drives; and even the moonlight serenades, and "the slight flirtation by the light of the chandelier." Mrs. Georgia speaks the truth. "Vanity" all this undoubtedly is in *her*. But, *entre nous*, the "vexation of spirit" appertains to certain "small" accounts, ranging from fifty to fifteen hundred dollars, and sent in by landlords, merchants, jewellers, milliners, &c.—people so wanting in delicate perception as not to see that the honour of the belle's custom was quite payment enough in itself for their goods; and so utterly destitute of classic lore, and the faculty of distinguishing persons, as actually to draw out on a piece of paper a list of items opposite to a row of figures, with a sum total at the bottom, and send it to a Circe, as if she were a tradesman and could understand it. Charming Georgia did not even try to comprehend such mysterious hieroglyphics; she knew, bewitching creature! that "where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." Therefore, to escape duns, to recruit health and spirits, and, of all things, to console Major Clifton, she has come down to White Cliffs. The beautiful Georgia presented herself to the mourning master of White Cliffs in a very deprecating spirit. She said that she felt her arrival there at such a moment to be almost an intrusion, but that he would excuse it, as she had exhausted money and credit, and had no other home.

"You know," she added, as the tears suffused her large

dark eyes, "I am like the unjust steward of the parable, 'I cannot work—to beg I am ashamed.'"

"Except, instead of being unjust, you suffer from the injustice of others," said Archer Clifton very gently. He said that he considered the entail, which cut off the widow from any share in the landed estate of her deceased husband, very unjust and cruel. He knew that his uncle had deeply regretted it, and would have left all his personal property to her had it not been swallowed up by debt. He said that he himself deplored the circumstance; and, if it were legally in his power, he would divide the land with her, but that he only held it in entail, and as entire as it came to him it must be held for his heirs. He added that he considered it his duty to compensate his uncle's widow for the injustice of the law to her; and that, the case being so, she would find thirty thousand dollars placed to her account in the Bank of Richmond. Mrs. Georgia was overcome with emotion at this generosity on the part of Major Clifton. She put her handkerchief to her eyes and arose hurriedly, with every mark of extreme agitation, exclaiming—

"No, no; this is too much! too good! Only lend me the shelter of this roof—once my home—until I look about me and consider what to do."

He took her hand with every demonstration of the tenderest affection and respect, and pressed it to his lips, and begged her to consider herself, as heretofore, mistress of the establishment for as long as she wished—for her whole life, if she pleased—and himself only as her sometime guest; adding that it was impossible he should ever bring another lady there. She withdrew her handkerchief from her eyes, and, glancing at him with a countenance eloquent with gratitude, respect, and affection, exclaimed—

"*I* take a large portion of your personal property, and *I* turn you from your home? Oh, no, no! thou thrice noble and generous man, no! Not one dollar of that money will I touch, so help me Heaven! And not one hour will I stay under this roof, if the master of the house is to be only my 'sometime guest!' No! I—I—I must go back to the city and give lessons in drawing and painting, as befits the artist's daughter."

"And as does *not* befit my uncle's widow, lady!" said Archer Clifton, again taking her hand. "I have considered

myself in some sort your guardian and protector—if you will admit the claim. Now, listen to me calmly and act reasonably, for we of White Cliffs are not accustomed to be opposed by the ladies of our family. Hear me, then: this money which I have placed to your account is rightfully yours. I will explain. It was the fortune of my dearest Carolyn—" Here his voice faltered; he paused a moment, during which Georgia pressed his hand and looked in his face with an expression of unspeakable sympathy, then he resumed calmly, "Had she died unmarried, and during her father's lifetime, this money would have reverted to him, and he would doubtless have left it to you. I only give you that which, but for me, might have reached you more directly; and now let that subject rest for ever."

"Ah, but, best and most generous of friends, I drive you from your home by staying here! I cannot stay! I must depart!"

"You must not, Mrs. Clifton; this is your proper home, as it is also mine. You do not drive me hence; why should you? Could I possibly remain, your company would be the dearest solace I could have. No; it is memory that drives me hence, sweet friend! I must—I must forget myself in distant lands! Forgive me for talking thus. To be quite plain, as soon as the intricate affairs of this estate are disentangled and wound up, I design to set out for two or three years of travel; yet I shall not be able to get off for several weeks."

Here the conversation ended for the present. Thinking that for the first few days, at least, Mrs. Georgia would need a female companion, he got in his chaise and went over to Hardbargain for Catherine.

"Kate is not here," said Mrs. Clifton, in answer to his inquiries. "Do you not know that she has been for three weeks at her brother's cabin, nursing his wife through her confinement?"

Major Clifton threw his hat upon the table and dropped himself into a chair, with an air of extreme vexation, saying, "It really seems to me that that girl is nurse and servant-in-general to the neighbourhood! Her brother might easily have found some old woman to nurse his wife. I wonder you permit her to be made such a slave of by everybody, mother."

"It does her no harm, Archer."

"Twelve months since you introduced Catherine into the best society in Richmond."

"The richest, you mean; not the best, by a great deal."

"And now you suffer her to throw herself into the most vulgar and common! Dear madam, is this right?"

"'What God hath cleansed, call not thou common or unclean;' yes, it is right! Catherine, a girl of the very humblest birth, with natural talent and acquired accomplishments that fit her for any circle, should mix with all; and, Archer, what do you mean by 'vulgar?' If ignoble minds, corrupt hearts, and mean actions constitute vulgarity, then I, for one, have met more vulgar people in so-called high life than ever I saw in low life!"

"My dear mother, you are a Republican; let us waive this discussion, for I dislike to differ from you, and tell me where I shall find Catherine, for she positively must return with me to White Cliffs, to bear Mrs. Georgia company until some other companion can be procured for her."

"Catherine is at her brother's cabin, as I told you."

"The same cabin he occupied before I left home?"

"Certainly."

Major Clifton entered the gig and turned the horse's head towards the dell in which the overseer's cabin stood. When he drew up before the door, Carl came out to welcome him and invite him to alight.

"No, thank you; send Catherine hither," he said.

Carl looked very much as though he did not intend to obey this haughty behest; but Catherine had already heard the demand, and appeared at the door.

"How do you do, Kate? Mrs. Georgia Clifton is at my house, and I wish you to return with me to attend upon her. Come, get your bonnet at once, Catherine, for I am rather hurried."

"We cannot spare Catherine, sir," said Carl in a tone of displeasure.

"I did not address myself to you, my good fellow," said Major Clifton, looking over his head and through the door of the cabin, watching Catherine as she tied on her bonnet.

When Kate came out, he handed her into the gig, and, nodding carelessly to the flushed, indignant Carl, drove off.

When they had driven a little way, "Catherine," he said, "is that man your full brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"The same father and mother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph! You are not at all alike in feature. Are you very much attached to this brother, Catherine?"

"Yes, sir."

"Humph!" He did not speak again until they had reached White Cliffs, when he handed her out and said, "Catherine, Mrs. Georgia is greatly fatigued. I wish you to attend to her comfort this evening—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir," replied Kate.

The next day, Mrs. Clifton of Hardbargain came over to call on Georgia; and afterwards, at the earnest solicitation of her son, she paid them a visit of a week. Major Clifton busied himself with the settlement of the estate. Although the great debts of the late Mr. Clifton could not be recovered of him, he determined to pay them all; a great many of them he discharged at once by cash, and in payment of others he gave notes bearing interest. The calling in of these numerous debts, and the arrangement of the terms of payment, and other matters, occupied him nearly two months, so that it was the last of autumn before he was ready to set out on his journey.

He had taken leave of his mother the evening previous to the day upon which he was to leave home. The next morning, in parting from Mrs. Georgia and Catherine, he took leave of the lady in a tender and respectful manner, raising her hand to his lips; but he drew Kate to his bosom, and, pushing back the rippling waves of chestnut hair that concealed or shaded two-thirds of her massive forehead, he said gravely and sweetly, "What are you going to do with all this brain while I am gone, Kate? How much longer will it lie fallow? Well, never mind." He kissed her freely and fondly as a near relative might, and, bowing once more to Mrs. Georgia, hastened away. He paused upon the threshold of the door, however, seemed to hesitate, then suddenly came back, seized the hand of Kate, and drew her out upon the porch. "Catherine," he said, "do you remember a promise you made me once, not to marry without my consent?"

"Yes, sir, I remember it."

"I hold you to that promise, Kate. I must speak plainly to you at the risk or the certainty of wounding your feelings. Yours is a singular position, Catherine—a girl of humble birth, quite penniless, yet with education and accomplishments that fit her to grace a higher circle. It is not likely, Catherine, that any gentleman in this part of the country will ever become a suitor for your hand, and no one who is not a gentleman should be permitted to do so. Therefore, Catherine, I wish you to promise me not to listen to any proposals without my consent."

"I promised you long ago, sir. I will keep that promise until you release me from it."

"That is a good girl! Now, then, once more good-bye;" and again he folded her to his bosom, and then indeed he was gone.

Catherine turned with the intention of seeking her own room, but was instantly confronted by Mrs. Georgia Clifton, who stood before her with pallid cheek, set teeth, and gleaming eyes. She caught the wrist of the girl, and, keeping a strong, vice-like grasp upon it, dragged her almost with violence into the parlour before the window, and, casting herself into a chair, pulled Catherine up before her, and fixed those wild, dilated, star-like eyes upon her face. It fell blushing under the gaze.

"You love that man!" she said, drawing her breath hardly, like one in a passing pain.

The blush deepened upon Catherine's cheek, but she did not reply in words.

"Speak! answer me! You love that man?" she repeated, clutching the wrist of the girl so tightly as to cause her to wince.

"Madam, I am grateful to Major Clifton," answered Catherine; "he is my benefactor, he cares for me, and I am grateful to him."

"He is an arrogant man—he reminded you of your low birth."

"I know he did, madam; and perhaps I ought to have vindicated our common human nature, and told him, as I tell you now, that there is no such thing in God's universe as low birth—that every child comes into His world with equal claim upon His people: perhaps it was my duty to have told him this, only I am always a coward before Major Clifton

and never can say the right thing at the right time to him as I can to others."

"You love him—that is the reason! And you are a fool if you do not know it, or a hypocrite if, knowing it, you deny it. But he despises your love! He said to you himself that no gentleman would be likely to be a suitor for your hand!"

"I know he did, lady. His care for me makes him say rough, blunt things sometimes. I can bear them from him."

"You love him; deny it, if you dare! But you are an idiot! an idiot! if you do not take his hint to conquer that passion! He said it was not likely that any gentleman would ever become a suitor for your hand. He is a gentleman; therefore he can never stoop to you! You do not answer me. Do you, perchance, deceive yourself with the idea that he ever will?"

"Lady, no; I do not deceive myself with the idea that he will ever 'stoop' to marry me. The woman that Major Clifton shall marry, if he ever marries, will be quite worthy of him; and that will preclude the idea of his 'stooping' to her."

"And that woman will not be you, presumptuous girl! Do you dare to hope it will? Speak—answer me!"

"Lady!" said Catherine in a tone of grave and dignified rebuke, "considering the recent bereavement of Major Clifton, the discussion into which you have drawn me is indelicate, to use no harsher term!"

"Recent! It is of five months' standing! You evade my question—you evade all my questions! I asked you if you loved him? Answer me!"

"Lady, long ago my heart became too unruly for my own management, and I gave it, with all its desires and affections, to God. I love nothing out of Him."

"And do you expect Archer Clifton will ever marry you? Answer that!"

"Madam, I expect nothing."

"Do you hope it, then?"

"Lady, I hope nothing."

"You prevaricate, girl! Do you wish it, then?"

"Madam, I only wish that God may appoint all times, seasons, and events in my life—making me humble, generous, and grateful in prosperity, if it comes; and strong, coura-

geous, and patient in adversity, if, as is most likely, that comes."

"Humph! Would it make you happy to be the wife of Archer Clifton?"

"Mrs. Clifton, you have no right to ask me that question."

"Yet I do ask you, and I insist upon a reply!"

"And I decline giving it."

"I am answered. You love Archer Clifton! You feed your heart upon the secret hope of one day being his wife! And now listen to me, girl!" she exclaimed, every vestige of prudence and self-restraint swept away by her rising passion, "I, too, day and night, feed my soul upon one desperate hope—that I live for, would die for, or go to perdition for! I, too, love Clifton. I loved him the first hour I ever saw him; I have loved him ever since, only more madly for every obstacle, danger, duty that stood between, dividing us! I have schemed, dared, sinned for him! Twice he has been snatched from me by fate, twice restored to my hopes. Oh, I know my own strong will had much to do with that restoration! He is given to my hopes again! Think you, now, that you can win him from me? No, idiot! If there be any power in my own soul, on earth, in heaven, or in hell to help me, I will find it out and enlist it to give me this one desire of my heart—this man's love! Since first I ever beheld his face, I have dreamed, hoped, toiled, lived for nothing else! I have suffered for him! Oh! angels and devils, how I have suffered for him! In the days when he came wooing Carolyn—wooing her before the face of me, bound with indissoluble chains—me, loving him as she had no power or conception of loving anything—many times I was almost mad with despair; knowing, too, if he would only love me, I should be nearly mad with joy! I have sacrificed great prospects for him—yes, little as you think me capable of it. This summer I might have made a splendid alliance in Richmond—a travelling nobleman—an English nobleman, girl! a baron with an annual rental of thirty thousand pounds sterling! I rejected him, when I knew that Clifton was free! In the faint hope of winning Clifton, I would not bind myself. All that I have ever done of good or of evil has had him for its end and object. I was the belle, queen, idol of Richmond! If I schemed and toiled for a position, and gloried in my success, it was that *he* might hear of it, and his pride might

be enlisted for me. You saw me one winter at the Governor's reception. You saw how I was worshipped there. But *he* was present, and free; and I did not care what the thousands thought of me—I only cared what that unit might think!" Her voice sank into tenderness, and she paused, and dropped her brow into both open hands; but soon raising her head again, she said, "Look at me well! Ay, look! What sort of a rival do you take me to be? If you cannot guess, I will tell you. I am not superstitious or scrupulous as you are. I am one who, for my soul's great passion, will do, or dare, or suffer anything! I ask no leave of earth or heaven for what I do! I do what I will, or *can*, and take the consequences; earth or heaven can but punish, and I can risk or bear it—for there is no pain or loss in the universe that I weigh with the loss of my love; and not for the fear of eternal perdition, not for the hope of everlasting salvation, will I forego the joy of my mortal love! Now, hear me, girl!" She rose upon her feet, bending over Catherine, with her hand clutched upon the maiden's shoulder with a vice-like grip, and gazing into her eyes with contracted, gleaming pupils, she said, while her voice dropped into the low, deep, stern tone of intense and concentrated passion in which every word, syllable, letter, was articulated with a distinct, metallic ring—"Now, hear me! If you dare to come between me and my love, by the living Lord that sent my burning soul upon this dull earth, and who can hurl it hence to a burning perdition, I will find a way to kill you! Do you hear me?"

Catherine grew pale beneath the tiger eye and clutch of the fearful woman; but she answered, "Madam, I have heard you utter wild and wicked words. I will endeavour to forget them."

"Remember them! You are warned!" and, releasing her hold, the dark lady passed from the room.

Catherine remained sitting where she had left her, appalled by the exhibition of demoniac passion she had witnessed. One pain and one fear possessed her above all others—deep regret that this most wicked woman had evidently already attained such an ascendancy over the mind of Clifton, and dread lest, in despite of all the sin, she would gain her object—his hand. But Catherine carried all her doubts and fears to her heavenly Father; and soon to her clear, strong mind it

became evident that, however wicked and unscrupulous, potent and dangerous the Circe might be on ordinary occasions, she possessed too little self-government, was under the influence of too strong and impetuous passions, to succeed in maintaining any long course of duplicity, such as would be necessary to the accomplishment of her purpose. And Kate became calm. She wished to leave the house. She could ill bear to live under the same roof with this woman, and meet her at least three times a day, at meals, if no oftener; but she had promised Major Clifton to remain with Mrs. Georgia until she should have other company, and she must keep her promise. It was, besides, doubly sacred, being made to him; and the pain it brought her was endurable, borne for him.

Mrs. Georgia sought the garden, the open air, anywhere where she could breathe freely. When the storm in her bosom had subsided, and reason was again in the ascendant, she could have torn her hair and beat her breast—yea, and rent her garments—with excess of chagrin, to think that she had so betrayed herself to Catherine. She did not fully believe that Catherine would repeat this scene where it could injure her, or anywhere in fact; still, she thought it safer to guard against such a contingency; and, while she herself still possessed the unshaken confidence and respect of Major Clifton, to impugn the conduct and character of Catherine, and thus forestall and invalidate any testimony she might hereafter give. She felt that she must proceed very cautiously. A plan of correspondence had been arranged with Major Clifton previous to his departure. She soon began to receive long letters from him, filled with interesting descriptions of the countries through which he passed, the people whom he met, and philosophical comments upon both; and to these she replied in other letters, full of appreciation, admiration, gratitude, and breathing, besides, the highest, purest, most disinterested sentiments and opinions upon all the subjects of their correspondence. Into these letters she gradually introduced the name of Catherine—carelessly, at first, as if she thought little about her, one way or the other, as thus: "Catherine is with me still—she desires to be remembered;" then, in a second letter, by a slight line of praise, as though the girl was rather winning upon her, as: "Catherine is well. By the way, what a remarkably

clever girl she is!" then, in another, with warmer panegyric, as though she really very much improved upon longer acquaintance, thus: "How can I ever thank you sufficiently for placing Catherine with me?" Next came high encomiums upon Catherine's talents, in this wise: "Catherine has left me, and is with your mother, as, no doubt, the latter has written you. *A propos*, what a mind that girl has! Did you ever observe?" and then, in a subsequent epistle, came an expression of wonder at the "diplomatic" character of Kate's intellect, and an opinion that the writer really believed her thrown away in private life; and next, a cooler mention of the maiden, with the hint of a fear that she was gaining the mastery over Mrs. Clifton's strong mind; finally, after some months, she wrote thus, as if speaking frankly from a sense of duty, and at the cost of great pain: "I fear that I have been greatly deceived in my estimate of Catherine's good principles. How shall I introduce what I am about to say to you? But you had best come home and see for yourself; for I know that your mother is in the power of as dangerous an *intriguante* as I ever heard of; and mind, she will influence Mrs. Clifton to disinherit her own son, and bequeath *her* the farm at Hardbargain. That 'Maria Theresa' brow of hers meant something, after all. But you do not know with what pain I write this, Archer. I cannot pursue the subject—only regard for you, and fidelity to your interests, would have drawn me to its discussion. I advise you to come home and look after your own welfare."

What influence this had upon Major Clifton will be seen in the sequel.

And while Georgia was exercising her power abroad, she was busy at home also. Having heard or guessed at Colonel Conyer's "foolish" attachment to Catherine, she wrote and invited him to make up a party of his own friends, and come down and spend Christmas with her; and the gallant officer, delighted with this quintessence and perfection of confidence and hospitality—this *carte blanche* to be filled up at his own pleasure—wrote and most gratefully accepted the invitation for himself and "friends."

CHAPTER XXVII

CATHERINE.

COLONEL CONYERS exercised tact and discretion in availing himself of the privilege granted him by Georgia. In consideration of the recent affliction of the family, he made up a very quiet and appropriate party: namely, the lady's father, the artist, a pale young clergyman who was suffering for country air, and the wife and sister of the latter.

After his arrival at White Cliffs, Mrs. Georgia gave him every opportunity of renewing his acquaintance with Catherine, and every encouragement to persist in his suit. Girls, she said, were often whimsical, and Catherine was especially shy, but disposed to think highly of her suitor, and well worth the trouble of perseverance. Colonel Conyers thereupon grew importunate, and Catherine became distressed at his persistence, and announced her intention of returning to Hardbargain. When her lover heard this, his grief seemed unbounded; he had so long counted on success, so long been deceived by Mrs. Georgia's assurances, and by Catherine's gentleness of denial, that now, when his hopes were quite overthrown, he became passionate and vehement in his demonstrations of sorrow. His trouble affected Catherine very deeply; she went and sat down by him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder, and said, in her gentle, sympathetic tones, "Do not grieve so; indeed, I am not worth so much love, or so much regret—indeed, I am not. I am a poor girl, very ignorant of society, very full of weakness and error."

"O Catherine! Catherine! that is nothing to the purpose. You are what you are; and I adore you! Do not make me wretched!"

"Heaven knows I do not wish to! I am your friend—indeed I am. I would do anything in the world to give you peace, indeed I would, except—"

"Except love me, proud girl!"

"Proud? No, I am not proud. Why should I be? Do not mock me! Indeed I feel that you have conferred the greatest honour upon me in your preference. An offer of his hand is the highest mark of respect and confidence a

man can give a woman; the world would think it higher still, coming from one of your rank to one of mine. I myself should in any case be proud of your regard, only—"

"Well? Only?"

"Only I feel so grieved to see you look so sorrowfully; but—"

"Well, my dear girl, well! but what?"

She paused; a slight blush suffused her cheek. She gathered courage and went on to say, "I do not know why I should not speak anything that may be upon my heart, at whatever cost to my natural feelings, if the hearing of it will do good to any human being. Yes, I will speak, for your sake. I do not fear to speak, for I have perfect confidence in you. Listen, then, Colonel Conyers, dear friend. You are not the only one who has missed earthly happiness. I think it must be written in the book of fate that we may not have those whom we love too deeply—in other words, that we may not have idols. It seems to me that, notwithstanding all other troubles, it would make us too happy, in an existence designed chiefly for trial and probation."

"That is a sad, strange, despairing sentiment for one so young!"

"No, not despairing—for if we may not have joy, there remain the peace and cheerfulness found in duty; and if we may not have the love of the heart's idol, there remain the affection of relatives, the esteem of friends, the love of God, and the hope of heaven."

"Catherine, you have loved. Tell me about it, my child."

"I intended to tell you about it. It is the best proof of entire confidence and esteem that I can give you. It will show you how highly I value you, and it will assure you also of the utter impossibility of getting a heart that is not mine to give—if it were worth giving."

She paused in great embarrassment, her cheeks were suffused with blushes, yet she seemed resolved to proceed. As if to assist her, he said, "This being whom you deify with your love, my child, what a splendid, what a magnificent nature he must have! what transcendent personal attractions! what an intellect! what a heart! Is it not so? Tell me!"

"Ah, no! you are mistaken. These things excite admiration and wonder; they do not of themselves win affection.

Oh, no! he of whom you speak is not so handsome as you are; he has no more mind than you have, and not so much heart; even *I* admit that."

"And yet you love him, and can love him!"

"Even so—do you wonder at it? Have not you passed by women—handsome, graceful, accomplished—to fix upon a plain country girl like me?"

"Oh, but not women with your candour, purity, and strength of mind. O Kate! what depths of truth and innocence you have revealed in the very confession you have made me! Who else but yourself dared make such a revelation?"

Catherine looked up at the speaker in doubt.

"Go on, dear girl. Tell me that this man adores you, and I will never, while I live, trouble you with myself again."

"Ah, no! it was nothing like that which I set out to tell you. Ah, no! I only wished to let you know that your case of disappointed affection is not solitary; that I, too, have missed life's crowning joy—the love of one I love. He does not even notice me now. I never permit myself to dream that he will ever love me. Yet I would like to live with him, to serve him—myself unknown, unnoticed, if I might only be near him. I envy the waiting-maids and men, and even the dogs, who are full-feasted every day with the presence for which my heart starves. I would like to give my life to his service, but I am unnecessary to his smallest need. Well! I cannot do him any good; but I serve one who is dear to him, and so I stay the hunger of my heart. Please do not think ill of me for telling you all this. It would grieve me to have you think any evil of me. I esteem you, and want your esteem. I have done some violence to my instincts in telling you this. Do not think ill of me for doing so. I only do it that you may know you are not the only one in this world who is—*not happy*."

"Think ill of you, Catherine? Do anything but adore you, and mourn your loss for ever, if lose you I must?—O Heaven!"

"This life is a tragedy; for always that which is dearest is lost in it, and it ends in death. The closing scene is the corpse, the shroud, the coffin, and the curtain drops upon the grave; all beyond is hidden, except to the eye of faith.

My experience of life has been all darkness, clouds, and storm; and the transient gleams of gladness or of hope have been, not like the sunshine, but like the lightning. Yet through all the grief, and gloom, and the tempting doubt, the 'still, small voice' of God's spirit has spoken to my soul, and comforted me."

"O Catherine, my child! that I could make your life all sunshine—that you would let me try! I do believe I could make you happy."

Catherine shook her head slowly, with a sad smile, saying, "We all believe that. We all think that in us only is vested the power of making those we love happy. It is because we know that we are willing, anxious to do more for them than any other person would. It is a fond error. Our efforts, our greatest sacrifices are often needless, as we ourselves are nothing to our gods of flesh."

"Am I nothing—nothing to you, then?"

"You are my dear and honoured friend."

"O Catherine, I could make your life happy! Nay, but do not look incredulous—I know I could. My love is not selfish, like that of most other men. It is perfectly disinterested; it only asks to serve you; it only desires to see you at ease. Dear Kate, you have told me all on your heart; you might lay that heart, with all its burden of unrequited affection, upon my bosom, and I would comfort and sustain it until I should win its love all to myself."

Again, and more mournfully, the girl shook her head.

"Do not pursue this subject, Colonel Conyers. Dear friend, by dwelling upon our wild wishes, they grow to seem hopes, and probabilities, and certainties. In my youth—"

"In your youth! How many years ago was that, Catherine?"

"Strange! but at eighteen, I really feel no longer young."

"Yet it is not winter, but a wintry spring, that chills your young life. That is not uncommon. Spring—the spring of hope, the spring of joy, the spring of life—will open indeed by-and-by, and be all the warmer and brighter for its lateness; and my Catherine shall feel younger—but for increased wisdom—at twenty-five than she does now at eighteen; that lot is for her, whosesoever treasure she may be. But what was she going to say happened in her long-past youth?"

Catherine smiled, and said, "Well, then, when life was newer and fresher, believing, as I do now, all the promises of the Bible—and saying, as I do now, that the days of miracles are not passed, and never will be so, until the days of God's omnipotence and man's faith is passed—I used to say that I would pray for what I wanted, though the granting of my prayer should seem to involve an impossibility; but now, later in life, I have learned a better lesson still, from the example of my Master. He might have saved Himself by a miracle; but He chose rather to endure the cross and the shame for the working out of His Father's will and purpose. God has a purpose and a will in every, the humblest life; and now, for all other vain and childish petitions, I substitute the words of the Saviour, 'Not My will, but Thine be done.'"

"Catherine, you must be happy, even in this world, you are so good; you must be made happy in the end."

"Ah, I should be sorry to set up the plea of goodness when I see so many people so much better than I am suffer so deeply. It is too often represented that goodness is rewarded in this world; but oh! how can anyone remember the life and death of a thousand martyrs, and the crucifixion of the Saviour, and not feel that it is not so, and not feel that the reverse is often so!"

"O Catherine! that is a very gloomy doctrine, and I will not believe it! There is a hopeful text of Scripture that comes into my mind: 'Godliness is profitable in all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.' It is the clouds of your wintry spring that make everything look so gloomy to you!"

"It is not a gloomy doctrine! Oh, no! not gloomy, by all the hope and illumining of the glorious Resurrection and Ascension."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WINTER EVENINGS AT THE FARM.

CATHERINE returned to Hardbargain on Christmas-eve. It was a clear, cold, crisp afternoon, and the level sun threw a glistening, yellow lustre, like powdered gold-dust, over the

crusted surface of the snow-clad earth. And as Kate's little rough-coated pony stepped freely out over the ground, life, and hope, and joy tided back to her heart, giving bloom to her cheeks, light to her eyes, and elasticity to all her motions. She was very glad indeed to find herself on her way to the farm, and about to exchange the feverish, exciting atmosphere of White Cliffs, and the disturbing proximity of Georgia, for the long, calm days, and long, calm evenings with Mrs. Clifton, at the farmhouse. She reached her destination at dusk. Mrs. Clifton met the girl with a smile of pleasure, and welcomed her with a kiss of affection. Then she conducted her into the parlour, where she made her sit down by the fire, while she removed her bonnet and shawl. Next she summoned Henny, and gave orders that tea should be served immediately, and a fire kindled in Miss Catherine's room, as the young lady was fatigued, and would wish to retire early. There was in the manner of the lady upon this evening, and from this evening, a maternal tenderness and solicitude very soothing and delightful to Catherine. This was so apparent to the domestics, that they began to deport themselves towards the maiden with the deference due to the daughter of the house.

And how calmly and cheerfully the winter days passed. There was the early rising, and the early breakfast in the warm, bright, back parlour, where the morning sun shone in. There was the leisurely talk over the meal about the occupations, which were also the amusements of the day. After breakfast, came the ride around the farm, in the course of which every field, and barn, and granary was inspected, and every negro-quarter visited; and during these rides Mrs. Clifton gave Catherine much information relating to agricultural matters.

"For, my dear," she said, "some day you may be a planter's wife, and have all these things to look after, while your husband is in the public service, absent with his regiment, or at the legislature;" to which Catherine ventured no reply. And then came dinner, and the short afternoon nap, and tea, and the long, serene evening by the fireside, employed in needlework, enlivened by rational, cheerful conversation, and occasionally varied by music or reading, and finally ended by family prayer and bed.

Mrs. Clifton and Catherine never, never wearied of each

other. They had many occupations for hands and heads; they were both strong, original thinkers, and, above all, were both deeply interested in the same being—the absentee.

And now Catherine enjoyed a very dear but dangerous delight in the perusal of Major Clifton's letters of travel. These letters arrived about two in a month. And, ah! the evenings when they came were festivals indeed to the recluse lady and the maiden. Often when one was brought in, Mrs. Clifton reclining, through weakness, upon the sofa, shading her eyes with her hand, would say, "Break the seal and read it to me, dear Catherine." And Kate would do so—drawing delicious draughts of perilous pleasure from the poetic and artistic spirit that pervaded every sentiment, narrative, and description in the epistle. And on these long, quiet, winter evenings, very often the conversation turned upon the absent son—the dear topic always introduced by his mother. It seemed as if Mrs. Clifton wished to make Catherine thoroughly acquainted with his character and disposition—with his faults and weaknesses, as well as with his virtues and powers.

"My son has his serious imperfections, like other men, of course—though your eyes contradict me, Catherine; if I, his partial mother, see them, they exist, you may depend. Archer is no demigod, my dear, in the estimation of anyone but—well, no matter—don't blush so. I am his mother, and I love him, too, and think highly of him, of course; but I acknowledge he is no angel, Kate, and I should be sorry you should take him for one: disappointment would come of it, my dear. He is proud, jealous, and suspicious as a Spaniard; and while under the influence of these feelings he is reserved and sullen as an Indian. Yet these faults of character have been so transfigured in my dear Kate's affection, that they have actually seemed virtues; the pride, jealousy, and suspicion have seemed high sense of honour and intellectual acumen, and the reserve and sullenness dignity! Is it not so, my dear?"

Kate's eyes lighted, and her cheeks flushed highly, but not with bashfulness—with an emotion that was swelling at her heart; and, carried away from self-consciousness by enthusiasm, she answered, "O madam! I know what I would say to you, if I only knew how to say it. Heaven

sends divine thoughts and feelings into my heart and brain sometimes, but they cannot pass thence into words—they are choked up, perhaps, by sin or imperfection. Such a feeling I have now—heavenly light, if I could only refract it—" She paused an instant, unconscious that the lady was looking intently upon her. Then she spoke again slowly, in a kind of calm fervour, "Real affection—I do not mean passion or imagination—but real love does *never* invest its object with *unreal* virtues!—never! All faults are the excess or the deficiency of some virtue. Well, real love sees its object not, perhaps, as he is at his worst—not even, perhaps, so evil as he is even at his best; but as he may become—as he surely *will* become, if that real affection continues faithful to its trust. Ah! how strong that conviction is in my heart—how weak upon my lips!"

"I understand you, Catherine; and may your true affection be the divine alchymy that shall transmute all Archer Clifton's faults into virtues." At this personal reply, Catherine's eyes fell and her cheeks burned with sudden self-recollection, and for weeks after this she could not recall the conversation without deep blushes.

More and more freely as the weeks passed by did Mrs. Clifton talk to Kate of her son and his peculiarities, and the best way to meet them.

"You know, my dear Catherine, the apostle, in order to win proselytes, made himself all things to all men. Archer is proud; and my dear girl must raise herself a little out of that humility of manner which is very distasteful to the haughty, except when exhibited towards themselves, when it naturally becomes very acceptable." This style of conversation, addressed to her for weeks and months, was at once very pleasing and very painful to Kate. It was sweet, it was dear beyond measure, to be considered in this near relation to her beloved, to be addressed daily and hourly as if she possessed the power of rendering his future life better and happier, and so addressed by his own mother, too; but it was also humiliating to be supposed to presume on the future esteem and affection of one who had never addressed the language of love to her. Often she thought of begging Mrs. Clifton to desist from this style of conversation; but a certain bashfulness, a deep respect for the lady, a distrust of herself and of her own experience, and the childish thought

that Major Clifton might have intrusted to his mother an intention that he never confided to herself, its object, and the delight of living in this blessed illusion, and the fear of breaking the charm, kept her silent for a long time, during which Mrs. Clifton gradually fell into the manner of considering her and speaking to her as her son's future wife. All at once, one day, it suddenly struck Kate that Mrs. Clifton might be the victim of a mistake, and under the impression that some understanding or engagement existed between herself and Major Clifton, and that her own silence and seeming acquiescence had served to confirm this error; and this very natural and rational thought fell upon the girl like a thunderbolt, utterly blasting and destroying all her beautiful hopes, and covering her face with the blushes of deep humiliation. She felt that she must undeceive Mrs. Clifton immediately; so when they sat together at the work-table, before the evening fire, and the lady spoke of her son, saying, among other things, "The most unhappy trait in his character is his tendency to suspicion, my love. Be straightforward with him, Catherine; never have a secret from him, not even one touching a little pleasant surprise. Be perfectly frank and open-hearted with him; and, alas! even that course may not always save you from suffering by his besetting sin: and when it does not, Catherine, there is nothing left for you but patience and trust. You see, on Archer's behalf, I expect a great deal of you, my love, like all mothers-in-law, I suppose."

Catherine's face was bent over her work; ashamed of her supposed mistake, ashamed of the weakness that now choked her voice, she remained silent for some time. At length, gathering a false impression from her long-continued silence, Mrs. Clifton said, "Do I hope too much from you, Kate, my love?"

With an effort, Catherine controlled her emotion, looked up, and replied steadily, "No, no, dear Mrs. Clifton, you do not demand too much of me. As far as my will and my power, as far as the grace of God aids me, I will serve Major Clifton with the affection and fidelity of a sister and a servant; but I have not the smallest reason to suppose that he will ever admit me to a friendship sufficiently intimate to make it possible for me to affect his character and conduct in any way, even if I should presume to wish it."

"My dear Kate, Archer's wife will be his friend, companion, and counsellor; he never would be happy with a mere housekeeper or parlour-ornament, however beautiful, accomplished and amiable. It is therefore he will prize my dear Catherine's clear, strong mind and proud heart—she will be admitted to his closest thoughts and his noblest counsels, do not doubt it."

"Oh, madam, you do not comprehend me yet, I see. How deeply rooted your mistake must be, dear lady! Oh, how shall I tell you? Indeed you are in error if you suppose—if you suppose that—" Kate stopped short and burst into tears.

Mrs. Clifton encircled her waist with her arm, and said, "Come, Kate, stop all this blushing and weeping. Let us be confidential, you and I, as mother and daughter should be; for you are as my own daughter, Kate, and am I not a mother to you?"

"Oh, yes, yes, dear lady!" said Catherine, taking her hand, and pressing it to her bosom, and covering it with kisses. "Oh, yes, you are indeed like a mother to me, if I were only worthy to be your daughter; and I love and honour you more than ever a mother was loved and honoured in this world before, I do believe!"

"Then let there be no reserve between us, dear Kate. Let us be open with each other, as parent and child, whose loves, and hopes, and wishes are the same. I have been plain with you all along, only gradually unfolding your future, not to alarm your shyness, and to win your confidence. I have longed for this confidence, this perfect openness between us, that we might talk with more intelligence and with more comfort, and I have courted it by my own frankness; but in return for all my candour, Catherine has shown me only reserve and blushes. Will she be more confiding now?"

"Alas, dearest lady, what can I say to you, but that you are greatly mistaken—sadly mistaken—oh, yes, indeed, sadly mistaken?" replied Kate, almost weeping again.

"I am not mistaken in supposing that Catherine loves my son. I am not mistaken in knowing that the fact gives me more happiness than anything else in the world; yet I would like to hear Kate admit it."

"Well, dearest lady, yes!—down, pride!—if it will give

you any pleasure to hear it, I must not withhold the confession. Yes, I *do* love your son—so much, so much, that it will make me an old maid!"

Mrs. Clifton laughed a little, low, jolly laugh. (The lady very seldom laughed; and when she did, it had a strange, exceedingly pleasant effect upon the hearer: it was a very agreeable surprise, revealing, as it were, under that grave, stern surface, traces of a mine of wit, humour, fun, and mischief that must have existed, and frequently sparkled forth, ere the sorrow and the seriousness of life smothered and extinguished it.) She laughed her little, low, jolly laugh, and replied, "That were a strange effect of love, Catherine; but, trust me, it will not be so with Archer's consent."

"Dear Mrs. Clifton, forgive me for saying again that you are very much mistaken. Never, never in his life has Major Clifton bestowed upon me one word or look that might be misconstrued by the vainest woman into a preference!"

"Well, Kate, I know that! I know that he has never addressed you on the subject; but I know that he will do so; for he loves you, Catherine, and has loved you from the first hour he ever saw you—even from the—the night he sat and studied you in your brother's cabin; and it is just as certain that you will be his wife as that you both will live to marry. So, dearest, let there be no more reserve between us. Consider this marriage sure, as it really is (so far as any future event is sure); and let me talk freely, for my time and opportunity is short."

Catherine raised her eyes to the sallow, almost cadaverous face of the lady, and a conviction of the truth and reality of what she predicted forced itself upon her with a sharp pang.

"Now, dear Catherine, I did not ask you for that troubled look. Will your heart ache because a dry leaf drops in the autumn, rather than hangs shivering on the tree through half the winter? But, dear child, I allude to this coming event, not to cast its 'shadow' over you, but to explain why I wish now to use these days in making you as conversant with the idiosyncracies of your future companion as only years of married life could do, and to prevent years, perhaps, of misunderstanding and sorrow. There is something dreadful in the discovery of unsuspected faults *after* marriage, and something very, very mournful in the

disappointment of the trusting affection, and in the saddened efforts of the heart to adjust itself to the circumstances—efforts that in one case out of ten, perhaps, succeed. But if the worst is known before marriage, the man or the woman may consider well whether they have the strength of heart to conquer their own faults, and bear with those of their companion. That you would do all this for your husband, Kate, I am convinced. I only talk now to smooth your path of duty." The lady here released Catherine from the embrace in which she had held her through this conversation, and desired her to ring for the servants to come in to prayers.

Catherine, as had been her custom for several weeks past, upon account of Mrs. Clifton's weakness, conducted the evening devotions.

When prayers were over, and the servants dismissed, Catherine attended Mrs. Clifton to her chamber, and assisted her with affectionate care until she had retired to bed; then, after receiving the lady's parting kiss, she hastened into her own chamber, threw herself upon the bed, and gave way to a long-pent burst of sorrow. Within the last three years Catherine had seen much sickness, death, and bereavement: one after another of her associates or relations had faded and fallen, and she had mourned their loss; and her life had taken a sombre hue, and sunk into a depressed tone. But that this beloved friend, this kind benefactress, this dear, dear companion, this more than mother, sister, all to her heart, should pass away from the earth and be seen no more—oh! it brought a sense of desolation that threw a shadow and a chill over all the future—over even the bright hopes shining in the distance. And then the identity of the love she bore mother and son together forced itself upon her heart; and she felt that a union with the son could not give her perfect content unless the mother were there to share her love and service, and to participate in their happiness. Without that mother's presence, their plan of life would be unfinished, their circle of love incomplete. And oh! came the sharp, agonising question, how could she ever bear to lose the light, and warmth, and strength imparted daily, hourly from that dear face—that face which had never looked on her but in affection—that face, the very image of Clifton's own, except that it was sweeter, holier, and never, never harsh—how could she ever

bear to lose her sweet resting-place on that more than maternal bosom—that bosom on which she could ever lay her aching head, or aching heart, in perfect peace and confidence, sure of being understood, sure of being sympathised with? Oh! life would be darkened, indeed, when she should pass away. The sense of sorrow was so sharp, so agonising, that the girl could have thrown herself upon the floor—could have wrestled with Heaven in wild prayer, that this life might be saved, and this sharp anguish spared her. But Catherine was habitually self-restrained, and she bore this mental anguish as she would have endured severe physical pain—in silence, in patience, until her soul was subdued to the meekness of resignation; and then prayer brought comfort.

And she met the lady in the morning with a cheerful countenance, and they spent the day as usual.

So passed the winter and the spring. Though Mrs. Clifton failed visibly from day to day, she still continued her rides around the farm, and her general supervision of the household and of agricultural affairs, and her instructions to Catherine. Her people, who well knew the nearly hopeless state of her health, foretold that their mistress would keep up and out to the very last, and finally die in her chair; indeed, while flesh and blood wasted away, her nervous energy seemed unimpaired, and her cheerfulness was undiminished. She talked of her approaching departure as calmly and pleasantly as she would have talked of going to Richmond, never obtruding the subject, however, unless necessity demanded its introduction.

The serenity and cheerfulness of the lady affected Catherine very beneficially, "familiarising" to her feelings the future, immortal life. Catherine endeavoured to persuade her to have a physician.

"Why, so I would, Kate, if I had any specific disease; but when all the frame is wearing out together very slowly and quietly, why call in a doctor to disturb the harmony of natural decay, and painfully build up one portion of the sinking frame at the expense of another? Why not fade and fail easily, as all else in benign nature does?"

Catherine next suggested writing for Major Clifton to hasten home.

"Why, my child? Why, because I am going the common

road, should others be hurried and worried? Everything in blessed nature and Divine Revelation teaches us a sweeter lesson. No, Archer set out for a twelve months' tour; let him complete it. He will return this autumn. Quite time enough, Catherine. I shall live till then, and longer. I can calculate the progress of my body's failing, and the duration of my life, with almost mathematical precision. I shall live to meet Archer, and to see you married, Catherine, and to leave you willing to survive me and be happy without me. And why not, dear? for shall I not be happier still?"

And so, in sweet mutual confidence, in cheerful resignation, and in patient hope, the summer passed, and autumn arrived in its glory.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RETURN.

NOTWITHSTANDING all her habitual calmness and cheerful patience, Mrs. Clifton began to grow uneasy at her son's protracted stay. He had been absent a year and a month; and even now, instead of setting out on his return, he only wrote of coming home soon. At one time he was at Vienna, at another at Berlin, then at the Hague—progressing, indeed, but very, very slowly, towards England and Liverpool, from which port he intended to embark. Every letter that came from him at this period was opened and read with visible uneasiness by his mother. At length the glad tidings came, a letter from the mid-ocean, brought by a swift sailing packet-boat that had spoken the vessel in which he had embarked. He was hastening home, and might now be expected at any hour. The news contained in his letter excited the invalid so much upon the evening of its reception that she passed a sleepless night, and rose the next morning weaker than she had ever been before—so weak, indeed, that she was obliged, in coming down stairs, to lean on the arms of Catherine and her maid for support; and when she reached the parlour, she was compelled to recline in an easy-chair, propped up by pillows, and with her feet supported by a foot-cushion. But her cheerfulness was undiminished. She gave many directions as to the adjustment and adornment of the room, and

the preparation of certain dainties. Lastly, she called Catherine to her side, and took her hand. Catherine did not appear to the best advantage, with her plain, dark gingham dress, and her chestnut hair divided simply above her forehead, rippling in tiny wavelets around her broad temples, and gathered into a twist behind. This plainness of style did not become her strongly-marked features. And the lady saw it, for she gazed thoughtfully upon the girl a while, and then, lifting her hand, disengaged a portion of her tresses from the comb, and let them fall, turning into natural ringlets down her cheeks, saying, "There, Catherine; when hair curls naturally and voluntarily, it is certain that the face it belongs to requires it so, and that it should be permitted to follow its nature, for nature does all things well. Why don't you always wear your hair so? It is so much prettier."

"Because, dear lady, I never thought it of any importance how my hair was fixed, so that it looked neat. But I will wear it this way, if it pleases you."

"It does. Your face is not a classic one, dear Kate; and none but a classic face can bear that Attic simplicity of style. Your countenance is a very noble one, Kate; but its very nobility is hard and stern, without the softening shadow of these ringlets nature has bestowed upon you. There now, look in the mirror, my little Oliver Cromwell; your face is much more womanly than before."

Catherine found it so. The soft, bright, drooping curls shaded and rounded her large, square forehead into beautiful proportion to her other features, and softened the expression of the whole. No girl but is pleased to see herself improved in beauty; and it was with a bright blush, half of pleasure, half of modesty, that the maiden returned to the lady's side.

"Now, dear Kate, you must leave off that dingy gingham, and wear white wrappers in the morning. It is early in the season, and you can wear white a month longer yet; and by the end of that time, I suppose, the world will expect you to wear black. You have no white wrappers, though, my dear?"

"No, madam, I never had one."

"Well, you have two white cambric dresses, without ornament; they will do for morning-dresses. Do me the kindness to wear them. Nay, now, Catherine, my dear, no hesitation; I will have it so. Go at once and put on one of them."

Kate complied, and in a short time returned to the par-

lour—by this change in the style of her toilet almost transfigured, yet without the loss of her noble characteristics. One thought troubled the maiden—the question, What would Clifton think of this? How would he take it? Would he suspect that she had dressed for his eyes? If he did, his suspicions would be well founded; and the consciousness of this truth suffused with blushes the cheeks of the ingenuous girl, and heightened all her beauty.

There was no certainty of Major Clifton's advent that day—he might come any day; but nevertheless they hoped for and expected his arrival. By a change in the hours, the stage now reached L—— at noon; and Mrs. Clifton had ordered dinner in the full expectation of having her son's company at that meal. Nor were their hopes destined to disappointment. A little after one o'clock, the carriage that had been sent to L—— to meet the stage returned and drove up to the door; and Archer Clifton alighted from it, and hastened joyfully into the house. Mrs. Clifton arose to meet him, but, overpowered by agitation and weakness, she sank back into her seat. Her son was before her in an instant, and had clasped her in his arms, and pressed her to his breast, and kissed her fondly many times, and placed her back in her chair to feast his eyes upon her beloved face and form, before he noticed how cadaverous, how death-like she looked: then a startled expression of surprise and alarm sprung into his countenance, and he turned upon Kate, to whom he had not yet spoken, a glance of mingled inquiry, anger, and reproach.

"You find me in poor health, Archer; but not worse, my son, than what might have been expected."

"My dearest mother," he began, but his voice choked; and to conceal the emotion he could not entirely suppress, he turned to Catherine and gave her a brother's greeting in silence, but at the same time darting into her eyes a look of stern rebuke from his own, which seemed to say, "You, at least, should have written and informed me of this." And the suspicions excited by Mrs. Georgia rose darkly in his mind, but were repressed again instantly.

"Dearest Archer, I am not usually so ill as I seem to-day. I have never been confined to my bed, or even my chair yet. Only, to-day and yesterday, the joy of looking for you has prevented my taking the usual quantity of sleep. I shall be much better to-morrow. Sit down by me and rest; and

when you are rested, your room is quite ready for you, if you wish to change your dress before dinner. Catherine, my love, will you go and direct them to serve dinner?"

Catherine left the room and gave the necessary commands. Then she ordered a boy to take Major Clifton's baggage up into his chamber, and went up stairs to show him where to put it. In the meantime, Major Clifton, in looking upon his mother's wasted form, had lost all self-command; and, saying hastily that he thought he would change his travelling-dress at once, hurried out of the room to give vent to a passionate sorrow, no longer to be restrained. He ran up stairs, but paused upon the first landing. Catherine, in leaving his room, found him leaning upon the balustrades, with his face buried in his hands, weeping convulsively. To women, there is something really appalling in a man's tears: we look upon them with more than pity—with awe—with something like the feeling with which Mary and Martha must have witnessed the Saviour's tears—with deep reverence be it said. Catherine would have crept by and slipped down stairs quietly, for she had a feeling of self-reproach for having even seen that strong outburst of sorrow; but he stood up and seized her hand, and drew her towards him, exclaiming, "Stop, Catherine! You have seen my weakness! Now, tell me why you did not write to me of this? Cruel and selfish girl! were you so intent upon your own projects that you could not find time to indite a line to let me know that my mother was dying?"

Another burst of weeping prevented his hearing Catherine's gentle explanation that Mrs. Clifton would not permit her to write. And Kate was not anxious to exculpate herself from an unjust charge; indeed, after once giving her little, meek explanation, she never thought of it again—she only thought of his agony of regret, and only wished to soothe it. He still held her wrist, unconsciously straining it in the strength of his emotion, until it pained her severely. But she did not care for that—she did not even feel it. She only cared to see him weep so convulsively; and, losing all self-consciousness, and with it all reserve, she threw her arms around him, and, dropping her head against him most tenderly, most lovingly, she said, "Oh, do not grieve so! do not! See how calm and cheerful she is! Try to emulate her calmness!"

"I loved her, Kate! I loved her more than ever son loved mother before! She was the worth of life to me! I loved her more than ever I loved human being—more, even, than I ever loved you, Kate!"

This was Clifton's first declaration to Catherine; and a strange time, place, and circumstances, and a strange method of expressing his preference, had fallen upon them. "I loved her more than I ever loved you, Kate!"

But it did not seem strange to Catherine. It seemed perfectly natural and in order. It did not startle her the least. It did not bring back her womanly self-consciousness, for she answered meekly, "I know it—I know you do. And, oh! don't *you* know that I would willingly give my life for hers, if I could restore her, in health, to your affections?"

"And yet you did not even write to let me know she was ill! O girl! girl! you were much to blame for that! It was bitterly wrong."

"I told you, but you did not hear me, that she would not permit me to write; she did not wish to give you pain, or to interfere with your arrangements for the year."

"Catherine, that does not excuse you! Could not your own heart have told you how precious, how inestimable to me would have been every hour of her company when her days were numbered? Could you not have written to me secretly?"

"I never did anything secretly in my life. I should never have thought of doing so. Besides, I could not have had a secret from her, so open, so frank, so noble as she is. No, I proposed to write for you to come home. I intreated permission to do so; but she refused to grant it, and I deferred to her better judgment. I would not have deceived her for the world."

"Then I have been unjust and unkind to you, Catherine; but you will pardon me when I tell you—when you see how thoroughly weakened and unmanned I am!"

The gust of sorrow was over; and Kate, with sudden self-recollection, withdrew herself from him, deeply blushing, and hastened down stairs, and the thought of her transient self-forgetfulness rendered the girl even shier than ever.

He went into his room and refreshed himself with a new toilet; and when he entered the parlour an hour after, no one would have suspected from his handsome, animated face

the existence of the sorrow that lay subdued at the bottom of his heart.

They dined together; and after dinner Catherine thought it best to retire and leave the mother and son alone to enjoy more fully their re-union. When she had left the room, "How pretty and lady-like Catherine is growing, madam!" said Major Clifton, looking after her, but addressing his mother.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Clifton, "lady-like, but not very pretty. Kate will never be pretty; but if she be 'blessed to her mind,' she will be more—she will be handsome."

After spending a long afternoon with his mother, Major Clifton took temporary leave, and went over to White Cliffs to pay his respects to Mrs. Georgia. Most happily for all concerned, Georgia had just left home for a visit of some weeks at Richmond—ignorant, it is to be supposed, of Major Clifton's arrival. He returned and spent the evening with the ladies at Hardbargain.

The next morning found Mrs. Clifton very much better, and in the evening she rode out, accompanied by Major Clifton and Catherine. Mrs. Clifton's cheerfulness infected all the party—both upon this evening and afterwards. Her decline was so gradual, so painless, that she never took to her bed, but, when weakest, sat in the easy-chair in the parlour, often with a little light knitting in her hands, that she would leisurely work upon, or drop into her lap, to be resumed at pleasure, while she conversed with Catherine and Major Clifton, or listened while one of them read, or both sang. There never were more pleasant, serene days than these of the invalid's gentle decay. It was genial, pensive autumn; the fall of the leaf without the house, and the fall of the leaf within.

Catherine was now the housekeeper. Through the increasing weakness of the lady, she had been so gradually drawn into this office, that she scarcely knew at what time its whole burden had accumulated upon her. One morning, while Catherine was in the store-room giving out meal and bacon to the negroes, Mrs. Clifton and Major Clifton occupied the parlour alone. He had been reading to her from Jeremy Taylor; but seeing that she had dropped her knitting, and was sitting back with a look of weariness, he thought it time to desist and close the book.

"Dear mother, you are fatigued; will you have anything? What shall I bring you?"

"Nothing, my son. I am not wearied more than usual, and it will pass in a few minutes."

The lady was silent for a little while, during which Major Clifton refrained from conversation; and then, after some little thought, she raised her eyes until they met his own, and, looking at him full in the face, she asked, "When are you going to marry Catherine, Archer?"

Major Clifton started violently, and looked at the lady in silent astonishment.

"Nay, pray answer me—my question is an earnest one."

"My dear madam, you have taken me by surprise!"

"Necessary bluntness, Archer."

"Very Oliver Cromwellish, madam, my mother."

"You must excuse it, dear Archer. You did not open the subject to me; therefore, feeling more anxious upon that affair than any other on earth, I am forced to broach it to you. But you have not answered my question yet."

"Dear madam, what—exactly—was it?"

"When are you going to marry Catherine?"

"Upon my honour, my dear madam, I have no intention of marrying Catherine; nor have I ever given her reason to suppose so."

"Ah! I had thought, or rather I had hoped otherwise," said the lady, relapsing into silence, while Major Clifton subsided into painful thought. Again the dark suspicions insinuated by Mrs. Georgia arose in his mind, to be repressed again with loathing; and he said indignantly to himself, "It is not true! I can never believe her to be an *intriguante*. Georgia is mistaken. Georgia's grateful and affectionate interest in my welfare leads her to unjust suspicions of others. Kate is noble-hearted—Kate is true—is truth itself. It would be misery to believe otherwise."

Mrs. Clifton gently interrupted his silent self-communion by saying, "Well, Archer, since you have no intention whatever of marrying Catherine yourself, you can have no reasonable ground of objection to her union with another?"

He looked up in surprise and anxiety; but soon the startled expression subsided into calmness, and he replied coolly, "Catherine's union with another! Oh, the supposition involves an impossibility!"

"I know you think so, Archer. I know you feel perfectly secure of this sweet girl, and just as easy about her as if she were secured to you by all the chains that Church and State can forge, and that is the reason why you take things so coolly, and listen to your pride; but I tell you that it is not as you think. You are not for ever secure of Catherine. Our moods of mind, and our views of things, change with time; and however the maiden may feel or think now, if you hesitate for years between your pride and love, she will naturally arrive at the conclusion that many a generous-hearted woman has come to before her, and say to herself, 'Well, I cannot be happy myself, but my life must not therefore be wasted. I can make some one else happy;' and, being scorned by one she loves, give herself away to one who loves her?"

Major Clifton started to his feet, with all the dark side of his character uppermost, exclaiming, "Let her attempt it! I would stop such a marriage at the altar! Catherine is mine, or nobody's. She could not repel my claim."

"Dear Archer, sit down; do not excite yourself or me. Remember, I am in a dying state," said the lady, as the best means of calming him.

"Dear madam, forgive me—forgive me; but why introduce this very embarrassing and highly-exciting subject? I have had conflict enough in my own bosom about it. I love your favourite; I love her jealously, fiercely—I admit it; but there are objections and difficulties which time, or a new set of circumstances, may remove. Meanwhile, I could not bear to see her snatched from me. But there is time enough; even if I should decide upon such a step, there is time enough. Kate is very young yet."

"But you are not very young, Archer."

"I know it, dear madam," he answered. "I have arrived at that age at which men do not make imprudent marriages for love."

"But when they too often make unhappy marriages of convenience. Dear Archer, it is a false and sinful principle that keeps you and Catherine apart. Will you spoil two lives by your pride? Your hesitation between inclination and prejudice weakens you and destroys her."

"Prejudices, dear madam! Well, I suppose they are prejudices; but just think of the horror of having Carl

Kavanagh, the farm-labourer, for a brother-in-law, and being called 'uncle' by his ragged progeny!"

"O Archer! your inhumanity shocks me They are human creatures after all—this Carl and his family."

"And don't you see besides, madam, that if I should marry Catherine, and introduce her into society, the first question would be, 'Who is she?' and the answer by some good-natured friend, 'The sister of one of his farm-labourers,' would expose us to contempt, if it did not rule us out of good company."

"Archer! Archer! can it be that you weigh these falsities with the deep realities of life?"

"It is a deplorable thing, indeed, that a girl of such noble nature should come of such ignoble parentage."

"No! it is a congratulatory thing; or would be so, if it were not such a usual thing. Archer, you will find more moral worth, and it may be more mental worth, among the so-called lower classes than among the higher. For instance, among the men, look at some of their brows, of Shaksperian height and breadth; think what they would be with cultivation! And I tell you, with all their disadvantages, the lower classes will give to our Republic the greatest of her future great men."*

Major Clifton remained in deep thought for a while, and then taking the hand of the lady, said, "My dear mother, the objections that I have advanced are those that have arisen in my mind, from time to time, giving me much pain. I wished to hold them up before myself, as I have just done, in order to see what they really consisted of, and looked like. I have seen the worst of them, and in their ugliest light, and they will not deter me from taking to my heart the girl I love. I have weighed them, and the whole mass is light in the balance with my need of Catherine. I will marry her. I will go and tell her so now. And the ceremony shall be performed whenever you think proper."

"Whenever Kate thinks proper, my dear Archer," replied the lady, smiling.

At this moment a servant entered and delivered a note to Major Clifton. It was from Mrs. Georgia, announcing her return to White Cliffs, and begging the company of Major Clifton to tea that evening.

* The history of the most prominent men of the day verifies the prediction.

CHAPTER XXX.

BETROTHAL.

MAJOR CLIFTON held the note between his finger and thumb, in a fit of abstraction, while a pleasant, contemplative smile dwelt on his face.

"Well, are you not going to answer it?" asked Mrs. Clifton, adding, "The servant waits."

"Oh, answer it? yes! What is it about?" he exclaimed, starting out of his reverie, and glancing at the note again. Then he arose, penned a hasty excuse, and, delivering it to the messenger, despatched him. Returning from this business, he said, "No, I cannot leave home this evening; since I have come to a decision, I wish to have a good, confidential talk with my little Kate. How much I have to say to her, how much to draw from her, if I can! What a prison-delivery of thought and emotion it must be on both sides, if I can get her to talk! But she is so shy, except when under some strong, disinterested feeling for another. Move her sympathies, and she forgets herself and loses all reserve; otherwise, she is so shy."

"Yes, very, very shy *to you*. Kate's heart and brain are sealed volumes to you. It will require the easy intimacy of long, domestic companionship to find out all her excellences. Her husband will love and esteem her far more dearly and highly than ever her lover has done; but, hush, here she comes."

The door opened, and Catherine entered from her morning household duties, with her little basket of keys hanging on her arm.

"Come hither, dear Kate," said Major Clifton, holding out his hand. Catherine put her little basket in its place, and quietly went to his side. He encircled her waist with his arm, and, holding both her hands captive in his own, looked fondly in her face till she dropped her eyes in confusion, and then he said, "Dear Kate, my mother here, who loves you almost as much as I do, if that were possible, wants to know when you will make us both happy, by becoming my wife and her daughter."

He paused for an answer, never removing his eyes from their gaze upon her glowing cheek.

"Yes, I am very anxious to know what day you will give yourself to us entirely, dear child!" said Mrs. Clifton; and she also paused for a reply.

Catherine, in extreme confusion, glanced from one to the other, and finally dropped her eyes again.

"Come, dearest Kate, it is but a word—the name of some day in the week whispered very low," said Major Clifton in her ear.

"Yes, let it be soon; let it be within a week, dear child. My time is short, Kate, and I wish to bless your marriage before I go hence. You know I told you that I could calculate the progress of decay, and the length of life, with some accuracy; and I tell you now that my days are numbered."

"Come, Kate, if you cannot speak, give me one of your short, quick nods. Come, this is Saturday; shall we be married to-morrow? next day? Tuesday? Wednesday? Thursday?" Catherine, whose heart had been filling all this time, now burst into tears. He drew her head upon his shoulder, where she sobbed a while, until he stooped and whispered, "Dear Catherine, try to calm yourself; do you not see how you excite our mother? There, lift up your head, and go to her; and both of you together arrange all these little matters as mother and daughter should, and she will let me know the result;" and, tenderly withdrawing his arm, he passed her round before him, and placed her beside Mrs. Clifton's easy-chair, and arose and took his hat and left the room, with the same happy, half-contemplative smile upon his lips. Kate sank down by the side of Mrs. Clifton, and, dropping her head upon the lady's lap, wept afresh. The gentle invalid put her hands upon the maiden's shoulders caressingly, but did not seek to arrest the current of her emotion. It was plain that the girl herself sought to stay her tears; for between her sobs she exclaimed, "Forgive—excuse—I know it's weak, wrong—it is only because—I'm so grateful!"

The fit of emotion exhausted itself, and she lifted up her face, wiped her eyes, and said, "Lady—"

"Call me mother, Kate."

"Mother! heart's dearest mother! do you think he mistook me?"

"How, Kate?"

"I couldn't speak—indeed, indeed I could not! But I

want you to tell him, mother, how grateful I am, and how happy! Tell him, for I never can, how much and how long I have loved him. My heart has been single to him ever since I first knew him. I will try to make him a good wife —indeed, indeed I will; and where my weakness or my ignorance fails, I will pray to Heaven daily for more strength and light. Oh, I know what a sacrifice of pride and prejudice he has made for love of me! Tell him so, mother; and tell him—"

"No, dear Kate, I will not tell him that. He has made no sacrifice. Nonsense! And if he had, you are worth it all, all—his wealth, rank, position, pride and all! Be true to yourself."

"Oh, what am I, that he should indeed prefer me to all the ladies in the great city that he has left? and what can I bring him but my love and my duty—all my love and all my duty?"

"And do you undervalue these, Kate? Why, they are the treasures of treasures; and you would judge them so in another's case. But here you are fond and blind. Now, dearest Kate, I am so anxious to see you the wife of Archer, and I wish to enjoy that pleasure as long as I can. When shall it be?"

"Mother, you and he have made me what I am, and given to my life all its worth and value; now, what can I do but give back myself and life to you? Dearest mother, fix it as you will; I shall be happy, any way."

"Thursday, Kate?"

"Yes, Thursday, dear mother."

The lady then embraced and dismissed her, and settled herself back in her chair to take a necessary nap.

Catherine left the parlour in that half-blissful, half-fearful trance that falls upon one when the great life's desire and hope is about to be realised—happy beyond measure, but somewhat incredulous that this could be really fact—really the "sober certainty of waking bliss," and no dream, and foreboding some stroke of fate that should snatch the too great joy from her. Major Clifton was standing within the open front door, looking out upon the glorious autumn landscape, and the changing foliage of the trees, some of the outer branches of the latter burning so red that they seemed a-fire in the rays of the afternoon sun; but he turned to Cathe-

rine, with a buoyant smile and step, and led her out upon the piazza. The habitually grave Arthur Clifton was almost gay. He was in that happy state of mind that all will recognise who have ever had a severe, long-standing moral conflict brought to an end, in which the reason, conscience, and heart are all satisfied. The struggle between the prejudices of rank and the passion of his soul was over, and the strongest had conquered, and now reigned alone, and a fine, vigorous, healthful joyousness had taken the place of all reserve, and gloom, and eccentricity. So great and happy was this change that Catherine felt no more the strange shy fear of him that had ever placed her at such disadvantage in his presence. He led her to a shaded seat at the end of a piazza, where there were no intruders but a glancing line of sunlight, and nothing to disturb them louder than the rustle of a falling leaf; and there he poured out the long-hoarded mysteries of his heart, talking on and on as the hours passed, until successively the sun went down, and the stars came out, and clouds arose and hid them, and shrouded the piazza in darkness. And still he talked — "an' he would talk his last," not even heeding the approach of a servant, until Henny's voice was heard, asking Miss Kate to come and give out tea and sugar for supper. Then he arose, and, half unmindful of the presence of the maid, he said, "This is very sweet, dear Kate—very, very sweet—to be able to say to you everything without reserve, to tell you all the long-withheld secrets of my soul, and see you listen with such deep interest. But when will you be equally frank with me? when will you show me your heart?"

The next day Major Clifton rode over to White Cliffs to pay his respects to Georgia.

The beauty received him with unrestrained joy; but in the conversation that ensued reverted to what she called "the intrigues of that low-born manœuvrer, Miss Kavanagh," asking him if he had not observed a great change in Mrs. Clifton, ascribable entirely to her influence.

It gave Major Clifton great pain to hear Catherine traduced in this manner; but he believed Mrs. Georgia to be perfectly sincere in her opinion, and only the victim of a mistake. He told the lady so, adding, "I am about to give Miss Kavanagh the highest proof of confidence that one being can give another. I am about to take her for

my life's bosom friend. We shall be married in five days."

Had a bullet sped through her heart, she could not have given a more agonised bound. Then she struck both hands to her temples, started hastily half across the floor, paused again as if distracted, and suddenly cried out, "You shall not do it! By my soul, you shall not do it! You never, never shall become the dupe of that woman! I have entered the lists with her—I mean, that to save you I have done so; and before I leave them I will prove her false and treacherous. God show the right!"

Major Clifton gazed upon her in wonder. The strong emotion that she had exhibited imposed upon him, for there was no doubting its reality; and, far from suspecting its cause, an unhallowed passion for himself, he ascribed it solely to her strong conviction of Catherine's unworthiness, and to her disinterested regard for his own welfare. And when she came and threw herself upon the sofa beside him, and besought, with all the eloquence that passion and the demon could lend her, that he would pause and not hurry on to his ruin, his confidence in Catherine's integrity was shaken to the foundation; and when at the end of an hour he rode home, he reached Hardbargain as miserable as the doubt of one beloved can make a man. If love has the divine power of transfiguring its objects until faults are excellences, suspicion possesses the demoniac faculty of deforming its victim until virtues seem vices; and under its influence the highest and best gifts of the maiden—her intellect, virtues, and graces—were turned against her: her talent seemed intriguing art; her meekness and humility became meanness and sycophancy; her piety, hypocrisy; and her girlish shyness, the sinister reserve of conscious guilt.

It was well that on his return he met Catherine only in his mother's presence, where deep regard for the lady constrained him into something like forbearance; though even then his moody manner excited some uneasiness in the bosoms of the two ladies. When Catherine left the room to order dinner, the conversation that ensued tended to strengthen his newly-revived suspicions. Mrs. Clifton told him that, with his consent, she would like to leave the farm of Hardbargain to Catherine, as a testimony of her esteem and affection.

"And for a more practical reason, too," she said; "for you

know, my dear Archer, that the estate of White Cliffs being entailed, if you should die before her, and without male children, Catherine and her daughters, if she should have any, would be left homeless; but if I leave her this farm of Hardbargain, it can make no difference to you during your life, and if Catherine happen to survive you it will secure her a home. What do you think of this plan, Archer? You look grave and troubled; if you have the slightest objection, I will not carry it out, of course."

"Surely I have not the least right to object, my dear mother; your property you have made by your own labour, and improved by your own admirable management."

"You have the right of nature, my dear Archer; and I see by your gravity that you dislike this arrangement, therefore it shall not be made."

"You mistake my thoughtfulness, dear madam. If I am somewhat grave, it is upon another subject. Believe me, I have not the slightest fault to find with this plan, neither does it take me by surprise—I have been prepared for it months since. Mrs. Georgia Clifton informed me that such was your intention."

"Is it possible? How could Georgia have known anything about it? But I suppose she has heard me drop words to that effect. May I hope, then, that this purpose meets your approbation, Archer?"

"Certainly, madam; it can make no material difference, if Kate is to be my wife; and if she were not to be so I should be quite as well pleased."

Unconscious of the double meaning of his words, the lady then inquired into the cause of his gloom.

"Merely a fit of moodiness, dear mother," answered Archer, "the reaction, perhaps, of yesterday's joy; a mere depression of spirits, which a brisk gallop over the hills will throw off."

"If you are inclined for a ride, Archer, you can do me a service at the same time, if you will go to L—— and bring out Mr. White the lawyer, to draw up my will."

A spasm of pain passed over the handsome countenance of Major Clifton, and he said, "I will do anything you please, dearest mother; but surely there is no necessity for haste in this matter?"

"Archer, there is; besides, my mind will be easier when

it is done; and, Archer, lastly, bring with you a clergyman—I wish to receive the Holy Communion."

Major Clifton made no farther objection, but left the room to order his horse; and in less than half-an-hour he found himself on his way to L——. Mrs. Clifton summoned Kate. When the girl entered, she found the lady on the verge of fainting, from over-exertion and extreme weakness. Catherine grew pale with sudden fear, and her hands trembled as she poured out and administered a restorative. Somewhat revived by the cordial, Mrs. Clifton said, "Kate, write two notes; one to Mrs. Georgia Clifton, and one to your brother Carl, asking each of them to come here this evening to witness a deed; or rather two of them, my dear Kate—the signing of my last will and testament, and the solemnisation of your marriage; for both must be hastened, Kate. My dear child, take your pen and write at once."

Deeply troubled, extremely agitated, yet struggling to govern her feelings, Catherine found the writing-materials and penned the two notes; but when she had finished them, in the abstraction of her great grief she misdirected them, and sent the note intended for Mrs. Georgia to Carl Kavanagh, and that intended for Carl to Mrs. Georgia. When she had despatched these notes by different messengers, and returned to the parlour, Mrs. Clifton said, "Call Henny, my dear Kate, and let her assist you in getting me up stairs. It has come at last, Kate."

Almost dismayed by sorrow, Catherine rang the bell that brought the servants into the room; and between them they raised the lady to her feet. Mrs. Clifton took a long look around the room, as though she were taking a last leave of every dear familiar object in it, and then suffered herself to be supported up to her chamber.

Mrs. Georgia Clifton was pacing her chamber-floor in all the distraction of excited evil passions, racking her brain for an expedient to ruin her rival and break off the impending marriage, when the "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts" furnished her with one. A messenger entered, and handed her a sealed envelope, directed in the handwriting of Catherine Kavanagh. She opened it in surprise, curiosity, and even in some degree of vague, guilty fear, and found within

the misdirected note of Kate to Carl. It read simply as follows:—

"DEAR CARL,—Mrs. Clifton is almost dying. She says you must come to the house this afternoon, at four o'clock, to meet a lawyer and a clergyman, and with Mrs. Georgia Clifton, to witness the signing of her last will, and also my marriage. Do not keep her waiting. "CATHERINE."

This note contained no expression of esteem or affection for the invalid, or regret at her approaching death. No; for Catherine's veneration and sorrow were too earnest, too real, to be a matter of wordy formula! But in the evil heart of Georgia this simplicity was turned against the girl; and her first idea, revealed in her smile of satisfaction, was to show this mis-sent note to Archer Clifton, and bid him look and see with what perfect coolness and indifference the writer could announce the approaching demise of her benefactress. But while this thought was revolving in her mind, Satan suggested a surer plan—a deadly stratagem; and, at this inspiration of the fiend, the dark face of the baleful woman lighted up with demoniac joy. She seized the note again, and rushed to the window, and scanned the handwriting. Georgia inherited all the imitative talent of her father, the portrait-painter. Catherine's handwriting was unique—small, square letters, with heavy strokes; a chirography peculiar to herself, yet easily imitated. Mrs. Georgia copied a few selected words, compared them with the originals, and was satisfied with her work. Next she wished to procure note-paper exactly like it. Catherine's note was written upon neutral-tinted paper that had been given her by Major Clifton. Mrs. Georgia recognised it as some that had belonged to him; she thought there might possibly be a few stray sheets in the writing-table of the library. She went thither, and, after a diligent search, found a single sheet; this she took with her, and returned to her chamber, locked herself in, and sat down to her fiendish task. Perfectly imitating the handwriting of Catherine, she forged the following letter:

"DEAREST CARL,—My long slavery is almost over; the old woman is at her last gasp, and wants you to come over this afternoon, at four o'clock, to witness her will and my

marriage. You see, I have succeeded in catching the aristocrat, and in wheedling his mother into giving me Hardbargain in my sole right. Am I not a triumphant diplomatist? When she is dead, and I am married, and mistress of White Cliffs and of Hardbargain, as I shall probably reside at the principal seat, I intend to let you this farm, on the easiest terms. Never fear Major Clifton's interference. You know *I* know how to manage him.

"CATHERINE."

When she had completed her demon-work, Georgia carefully examined it; it satisfied her. She smiled and muttered, "Any one who ever saw Catherine's queer handwriting would feel safe in swearing this to be hers." Then she folded it in the form of the other note, and placed it in the original envelope, and threw it, broken-sealed as it was, upon the table, exclaiming, "There!

"I have set my life upon a cast,
And will abide the hazard of the die."

In the meanwhile, Catherine watched by the bedside of Mrs. Clifton, awaiting the return of Major Clifton, with the clergyman and the attorney.

About three o'clock in the afternoon the party arrived. The professional gentlemen remained in the parlour while Major Clifton went up into the chamber of his mother. As he approached her bed, and perceived the fearful change a few hours had wrought in her appearance, and recognised the sure approach of death, he was so shocked, so overwhelmed with sorrow, that it was with the utmost difficulty he could sustain his self-command.

She held out to him her wasted hand, saying quietly, "My dear Archer, I wish to have the marriage-ceremony between you and Kate performed this afternoon, if you please."

"Certainly, my dear mother, it shall be as you desire," he replied, repressing a great groan, but desirous, above all things, to gratify that dying parent. "Shall it be *now*, mother?"

"No, dear Archer, not just yet—I want the holiest things left for the *last*. I want the will drawn up, witnessed, signed.

and sealed *first*, then the marriage-ceremony performed; and last, I wish to receive the Holy Communion; after which, I shall be ready to depart."

"Mother, the minister and the lawyer are below stairs, awaiting your leisure, they will remain over to-night; do not disturb yourself."

"My good Archer, I made Catherine write to Carl Kavanagh and to Mrs. Georgia to come to see me this afternoon; they have not yet arrived. Please go and send again for them."

Archer Clifton bent and kissed his mother's forehead, and went down stairs. In the hall he saw Carl Kavanagh, hat in hand, waiting.

Carl immediately advanced, and said, "Ah, Major Clifton, I am waiting here to see my sister, to return to her this note, that she has sent me by mistake. I think, perhaps, you can explain it." And he handed to Archer Clifton the mis-sent note of Catherine to Georgia.

Major Clifton understood the mistake at once, and, retaining the note, replied, "Catherine wrote two notes, summoning yourself and Mrs. Georgia Clifton to Hardbargain this afternoon, to witness the signature of a certain document. She placed them in envelopes, and in her haste misdirected them; that is all. Pray remain here, while I ride over home, and bring Mrs. Georgia."

Carl Kavanagh sat down in the hall, and Major Clifton mounted a fresh horse, and galloped over to White Cliffs. Dismounting at the gate, he threw the reins to a servant, and, entering the house, sent a message to Mrs. Georgia.

The servant returned, and, requesting Major Clifton to follow, led the way up to Mrs. Georgia's own room, opened the door, announced the visitor, and retired.

Archer entered the room, and found the lady seated at her work-table, but looking pale and anxious. By her work-box lay the envelope of Kate's true note, with the forged note in it.

"Ah!" said Major Clifton, after greeting her, "I see that you have received Kate's note."

"Yes; one that was never intended for my eyes, but of those of a fellow-conspirator."

"Conspirator, madam!"

"Yes, sir. Do you surmise all the consequences of these

mis-sent letters? Look at this!" she said, throwing it to him, "written by Miss Kavanagh, but directed by mistake to me. Yes, look at it! Examine the envelope! and then read the contents of the note!"

Major Clifton glanced at the superscription, opened the note, and read it through with a cheek growing pale and paler, until he finished it; then tossed it from him, and, burying his face in his hands, groaned aloud. He had not the slightest suspicion that the infamous letter was a forgery—no!—he had not a single merciful doubt that it was the work of Catherine—nay, he would have sworn to the handwriting, if called upon to do so, in a court of justice—he would have sworn to it though Kate's life hung upon his oath! Any one else who had ever seen her peculiar chirography would have felt constrained to do so, if requested, save two: she who laid dying at Hardbargain, and she was to know nothing about it—and he, the rejected lover, now far away, who would have cast that note aside in high disdain, and staked his honour on her truth. Clifton groaned aloud, in the bitterness of disappointed esteem. Resentment itself was swallowed up in sorrow, and he exclaimed, "Oh, would to God she had died, or *I* had, before I knew this!"

"Rejoice, rather, that you are saved!"

"Saved, madam?"

"Yes—saved. You will never marry her now! You are perfectly justifiable in breaking with the unmasked traitress!"

"And in shaking the last few sands in my mother's glass of life. The discovery of that girl's treachery has driven me to despair; it would kill my mother! No, lady! I must marry her, that my beloved mother may depart in peace."

"Marry her!" screamed Georgia, with the cry of a wounded hyena—"marry her, and sacrifice all your hope of happiness for the sake of keeping quiet the last few hours of a dying woman! You will not do such a thing!"

"My hopes of happiness, did you say, Mrs. Clifton? Ah, lady, can you not comprehend, then, that when one at my age has discovered, beyond all possibility of doubt, the total unworthiness of one the most beloved on earth—the heart's most cherished darling—the life's dearest hope—" down broke his voice, and down dropped his head upon his hands,

then, rising impatiently, he exclaimed—"I say, can you not comprehend that I have *no* hopes of happiness left? I loved her so! I trusted her so! I sacrificed such strong prejudices for her! And I was as happy as a converted sinner when the struggle was over and the sacrifice made. I could have shaken hands with her freckle-handed brother, and claimed kindred with all his ragged race; and now—I am unmanned! I am a fool!"

"No, you are not, unless you marry her. You are not the first noble-minded man that has been duped by a bad woman. You feel it as every generous-hearted man would; but it will pass. Life has many chances, and you will be happy yet. *My* friendship is not much, perhaps; but is it not something?"

"Yes—yes—yes, sweet friend, it is much," said Archer Clifton slowly, half soliloquising, as he took and held her hand. Then suddenly starting, as out of a reverie, he exclaimed, "Mrs. Clifton, you know my errand here, it is to bring you over to Hardbargain, for the purpose of which you have already been advised by the note."

"To be present at your mad marriage, among other things?"

"Yes."

"I will not go! I cannot! I cannot witness such a sacrifice."

"As you please, dear Georgia. I suppose there is no imperative necessity of your doing so. Good-bye!" and he arose, and lifted his hat from the table.

"Yes! good-bye, indeed!" replied Georgia bitterly—"good-bye, indeed! if you persist in your insane purpose! I shall remain here, and hope to the last; but when I hear that this marriage has really taken place, I leave White Cliffs within the hour!"

"You will think differently, dear lady, and I shall see you again shortly."

"Never as the husband of that traitress!"

He did not reply. He raised her hand to his lips, and left her.

Left to herself, mad impulses seized the disappointed woman. At one instant she was impelled to seize the forged letter, and rush to the death-bed of Mrs. Clifton, and there denounce her favourite as a hypocrite and a traitress; but

a moment's reflection convinced her that no art of hers could induce the dying woman to think evil of the excellent girl she herself had educated—that, on the contrary, such a step might possibly result in her own signal defeat and exposure, and the everlasting anger and contempt of Archer Clifton. Her brain was beginning to reel, and her self-confidence to wane. In sudden fear, she looked around for the forged letter, intending to burn it. It was nowhere to be seen. Then she recollected that Major Clifton had, on departing, picked it up, and put it in his pocket; and, sick with disappointed love, jealousy, hatred, and fear, she tottered towards a lounge, but, ere she reached it, fell upon the floor. In the meanwhile, Major Clifton, riding at full speed, reached the farmhouse.

On reaching Hardbargain, Major Clifton went immediately to Mrs. Clifton's chamber. He found her still sinking. She inquired, in a faint voice, whether he had brought Mrs. Georgia. He replied, with perhaps a pardonable ambiguity of speech, that Mrs. Georgia was too much *indisposed* to attend. Then she said that she supposed Mr. White (the clergyman) would consent to act in her stead. She informed him that the attorney had been with her, and had drawn up her will according to her instructions, and she requested that the parties might be assembled in her room to witness the signing. Major Clifton left the chamber to summon them, and soon returned accompanied by the lawyer, the minister, Carl Kavanagh, and Catherine. The will was then read, after which the lady was raised up in bed, and supported in the arms of her son; the document was placed upon a portfolio and laid before her, and a pen dipped in ink and presented to her. She signed her name, and immediately sank back exhausted. The two witnesses affixed their signatures, and the will was delivered into the custody of the attorney. A restorative was administered to the invalid, and she was arranged comfortably upon her pillows. Then she took the hand of her son, and whispered, "Let the marriage-ceremony be performed at once, dearest Archer."

He pressed that wan hand, laid it tenderly down upon the coverlet, and spoke apart with the clergyman, who occupied the chair beside the head of the bed. The minister solemnly arose, drew a prayer-book from his pocket, and opened it. Major Clifton went quietly and spoke a few words in ex-

planation to the lawyer and Carl Kavanagh, who then approached the bedside. Lastly, he took the hand of Catherine, and led her up before the minister. The marriage-ceremony commenced. It was performed according to the ritual of the Protestant Episcopal Church. But when the great question was put to the bridegroom—"Archer, 'wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife, to live together, after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour her," &c.—instead of answering, according to the ritual, "I will," he replied by a grave and formal bow, with silent lips, "that scarce their scorn forbore." When the corresponding question was put to the bride, Kate, too, replied by a gentle inclination of the head, but her true heart responded sincerely, earnestly. When the last benediction was given, and when, according to the old formula, the bridegroom was to salute his bride, he merely touched her cheek with cold lips, and passed her on to his mother, who held out her arms to embrace her daughter. The singularity of Major Clifton's manner was scarcely noticed, or it was ascribed to the solemnity of the attending circumstances. Mrs. Clifton now desired that all, with the exception of her son, and daughter, and the clergyman, should bid her adieu, and leave the room. Her request was complied with; and when they had retired, she signified her wish to partake of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper with her children. Major Clifton was constrained to decline, upon conscientious scruples; for how could he partake of the sacrament of peace and brotherly love, with his heart consumed with indignation against his newly-married bride? Catherine, however, participated in the Holy Communion, while he looked on with surprise, mixed with a degree of horror. When the sacred rite was over, the minister of God took an affectionate leave, and departed. When the minister was gone, and they were left alone together, the dying mother beckoned her son and daughter to come and sit near her. They obeyed her, and she addressed them a few words of earnest, affectionate counsel, blessed them, and resigned herself to rest. Her eyelids closed calmly, and her breathing was gentle and regular; they had to mark attentively before they knew that it grew fainter and fainter. Once she opened her eyes, and, smiling her old, reflecting smile, said, "Dear Archer, I have often tried to detect the exact moment of

falling asleep. I watch now, to see if I can seize the precise instant of passing from mortal to immortal life."

And she closed her eyes again. After a few minutes, she said, "Sing to me, dear Kate! You know the Christian's death hymn."

Catherine bent and kissed the pallid lips of the dying woman, and then her voice arose, sweet, clear, and spiritual as angels' songs, in that immortal requiem—

Vital spark of heavenly flame,
Quit, oh! quit this mortal frame;
Trembling, hoping, lingering, flying,
Oh! the pain, the bliss of dying.
Hark! they whisper!—angels say,
Sister spirit, come away.

At the end of the first stanza, she murmured faintly, "Your voice, too, dear Archer."

His voice arose now in unison with Catherine's, and they sang the remainder—

The world recedes—it disappears:
Heaven opens on my eyes; my ears
With sounds seraphic ring.
Lend, lend your wings; I mount, I fly!
O grave! where is thy victory?
O death! where is thy sting?

They ceased, and looked upon the marble face before them. It was still in death, but there remained upon the countenance the impress of the extatic smile with which the spirit had taken its flight—

Her death
Was like the setting of a planet mild.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE POISON WORKS.

When Archer Clifton saw that all indeed was over—when he looked upon that mother-face, the first which had ever met his conscious gaze in life; that old, familiar face, which seemed to him coeval with his being, and a necessary part of it; that face the most intimate, the most loving, the most faithful which had ever shone upon his path of life, and felt that it was lost for ever; that the light of those quiet eyes

was darkened for ever; the sound of that kind voice silenced for ever; the smile of those calm lips fled for ever—when he clasped that mother-hand, and felt that those dear fingers would close upon his own in cordial grasp never, never more!—oh, when he felt that all was over, over, "finished, done, and ended," he fell upon his knees by the corpse, dropped his head upon the cold, inanimate bosom, and broke into convulsive sobs.

Weeping freely, Catherine knelt by his side, and put her arm around his neck. He was unconscious of her presence, until, after giving way to sorrow for a few moments, she lifted up her head, and wiped her eyes, and, controlling her own emotion, sought to console him. "Do not grieve so, dear Archer," she murmured, with her arm again around him; "do not grieve, but pray."

Then, indeed, he suddenly grew calm, unclasped the gentle arm of Catherine from his neck, rose slowly from his kneeling posture, took her hand, and raised her upon her feet, and, regarding her with a stern and sorrowful countenance, said, in severe rebuke, "Come, madam, no more hypocrisy now! None here, at least! It is useless hereafter—you have accomplished your design. You *are* a 'successful diplomatist,' and your 'long slavery' *is* now over."

Catherine lifted her eyes, dilated with sorrow and amazement, and fixed them on his face an instant; but the look she met there, the expression of mingled suffering and severity, such as might have sat upon the brow of Brutus, when the feelings of the man and the duty of the judge strove in his bosom, awed her into silence before him. She could express no surprise or grief—ask no explanation. The old shyness and fear came over her, and her eyes fell, and her cheeks paled. Again he spoke in the same stern, sorrowful tone, "Ay, cower with conscious guilt! You are discovered! And you should have been unmasked before her to-day, but that I did not wish to embitter her last moments: that only saved you. Come! leave the room that you desecrate with your presence. Leave me alone with my dead."

But instead of obeying, she stood like a statue before him.

Then he took her hand and led her through the door, and closed it behind her.

Catherine stood there where he had placed her, amazed,

confounded, unable to move a step forward, until the thought of practical duties, now pressing upon her, gave her strength, and she passed on to summon those whose office it was to prepare the dead for burial; but amid all the multifarious tasks that devolved upon her at that trying time, as newly-installed and unassisted mistress of the house, she could not for an instant forget her awful bereavement, or the dreadful anger of her husband.

He came out of the room of death at last, and passed Catherine on the stairs, and his stern, averted countenance at that moment almost broke her heart; but she went on enduringly with her tasks. Often she raised her soul in prayer to God for help. Once, during that desolate night, she found time to open her Bible, and her eyes fell upon this text—Romans viii. 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God." She paused upon the text, repeating, "'All things,' *all things*, even this! I will believe it!" And her face grew beautiful with divine faith, and she reverently closed the book, and went on her way comforted. She had need of fresh strength and comfort, indeed, to meet a fresh trial. On coming down stairs she met Henny, who seemed to be on the look-out for her, and who placed a note in her hand. It was from Major Clifton, and read as follows:—

"I desire that you keep your chamber to-morrow, or, at least, refrain from insulting the memory of the dead by appearing at the funeral. "ARCHER CLIFTON."

She nodded her head slowly, meditatively, with a look of sweetest resignation; then beckoned Henny to follow her, and returned to her chamber. There she sat down and wrote the following note:—

"I will absent myself from the funeral, since you wish me to do so. I will also keep my room, if you desire it, when I remind you that there is no one to supply my place in the household arrangements for the solemnities of the day.

"CATHERINE."

She sent this by Henny, but received no reply to it. Construing silence into consent, she went about the house as usual, attending to her duties.

In the meantime, Major Clifton sat in his study, awaiting

an answer to a note he had written to Mrs. Georgia, apprising her of the recent events, and requesting her to come at once to the house. He had not to wait long; his messenger returned, and informed him that he had met the lady on her way to L——, to take the stagecoach to Richmond. The man, at the same time, gave the intelligence that Mr. Kavanagh waited in the hall, to know if he could be of any service to Major Clifton on the present occasion.

"Show him in," said Major Clifton.

The man went out and soon returned, accompanied by Carl, whose face expressed the most profound and sincere sympathy.

"Set a chair for Mr. Kavanagh, and retire, James."

The man obeyed, Carl seated himself, and in person repeated his condolences, and his tenders of service.

In reply, Major Clifton took from his pocket the forged note and laid it before him, saying coldly, "There is the note your sister wrote to you, and sent by mistake to Mrs. Georgia Clifton. Read it."

Carl took it up, wondering what might be the use of reading it *now;* but as he glanced over its contents, his eyes grew wide with astonishment; and when he had finished it, he laid it down again, exclaiming, "I am confounded!"

"I should think so, sir," coldly remarked Major Clifton.

"She speaks of letting *me* the farm. I never had the slightest desire to rent the farm; and before I heard the will read, I had not even the slightest idea that Mrs. Clifton designed to leave it to my sister."

"Ah! Really?" asked Mr. Clifton ironically.

"Really and truly, and sincerely and positively, I had not."

"Tautological asseveration is no evidence. Why should she have written to you thus if you had not?"

"How do I know, sir? I tell you I am amazed! And if I did not know, beyond all possibility of doubt, the handwriting to be Catherine's, I should say that she did not write, and that she never could have written such a letter."

"Which means plainly this: that, if there did not exist the most positive proof to the contrary, you would fain deny it," sneered Major Clifton.

"Yes, sir!" answered Carl boldly. "If the proof posi-

tive to my mind, as well as to your own, did not exist, I would deny it; and I do deny any personal agency or knowledge about it whatever. I say to you that I am amazed! It is incomprehensible to me how Catherine could have conceived, much less written such a letter; and, above all things, it is inexplicable how she should have written so disrespectfully of Mrs. Clifton, whom she loved and venerated so much."

"Or whom, for certain purposes, she *pretended* to love and venerate so much."

"She *did*, sir. She really *did*. She was sincere in her esteem and affection. She was sincere in all things."

"I know she affected rare sincerity."

"It was no affectation, Major Clifton. I have known her from childhood—it was truth. And I tell you, I scarcely believe my own eyes! I scarcely believe that I am awake when I see that letter! I am confounded!"

"Well, sir!" said Major Clifton sternly, his whole manner changing, "*I*, at least, am not so confounded as not to know that she never would have written such a letter to you, had you not been the confidant of her plans; and *you* are not so confounded as to be ignorant that, after such a development, I am constrained to forbid you the house, and to interdict all communication between your sister and yourself."

There was something of Catherine's own nobility in the manner of Carl's reply. He stood a moment with his forehead thrown back, as if in calm, unimpassioned thought; then he said, "Major Clifton, my sister is now your wife, and you have, doubtless, the perfect right to control her actions—neither do I accuse you of undue severity in this affair, for, under like circumstances, I should, perhaps, be tempted to act in the same way. I cannot account for this letter. For the present, it must remain unexplained. Nor can I exculpate myself any more than my sister from the odium of a suspicion, which God knows I am willing to bear with her, since I cannot clear her of it. You do not know how dear to an only brother's heart is his only sister. Yes! I *am* willing to share the odium with her, hoping, knowing that it will pass away in time. And then, Major Clifton, you will feel more pain at the recollection of the injustice you have done us than I feel now in suffering it. You will be

more angry with yourself than I could be with you. You will reproach yourself more bitterly than I could reproach you, were I ever so indignant. And I am not indignant at all! I could not be so! All feelings are subdued to calmness in the sacred proximity of the unburied dead in the next room. One thing only remains to be said. It is this: I cannot continue to live upon this place, under the cloud of the master's ill opinion. My engagement as manager of this farm terminates with this year; I shall be glad if, before the time expires, you will provide yourself with another overseer."

"As you please, Mr. Kavanagh. Yet I should not have sent you away with your young family."

"You are considerate, sir!" said Carl, bowing; then adding, "I presume you have no further commands for me, Major Clifton?"

"None, Mr. Kavanagh."

"Good night, sir."

"Good night."

The next day was the day of the funeral. Before the people began to assemble, Catherine, impelled by an irresistible desire to gaze once more upon the face of her beloved friend, found herself at the door of the front parlour in which the corpse was laid out for burial. But here, with her hand upon the lock, she hesitated, and, finally stifling her crying want, turned away, saying within herself, "No, I will not intrude. I will be guided by the spirit as well as by the letter of his commands. He will not accept my love. To yield him perfect, unquestioning obedience is all the earthly comfort I have left." And she began to retrace her steps.

Major Clifton came out of the back room and met her face to face.

"What were you doing near that door, Catherine?"

"I wished to take a last look at her dear—" Here Kate burst into tears and wept convulsively a few minutes, during which Clifton watched her in stern sorrow. Then controlling herself, she said, "I wished to look once more, and for the last time, upon her beloved face; but when I reached the door and was about to enter, I remembered your commands and turned back."

Clifton, who had never taken his eyes from her, groaned aloud. Then he said gravely and sadly, "Catherine if any

feeling of penitential sorrow inspires your wish to go there go, in Heaven's name! And may the sight of that dead face bring you to repentance."

She turned to thank him, and ask him what he wished her to repent; but before she could find words, he had re-entered his study. Catherine passed into the room of death, turned down the pall, and gazed upon the face of the dead. It had changed very much: every furrow and every wrinkle was softened out of it; the forehead was as smooth as the brow of childhood; an ineffable, a divine repose spread like a dream of heaven over the features. Catherine's tears were stayed, the convulsions of her bosom were calmed, her soul was awed and exalted as she gazed upon this countenance, so beautiful in death. But at last her full heart revealed itself in a look of unutterable tenderness and devotion, and she murmured, in low, slow, gentle tones, "You always loved and trusted me, and, for your dear sake, I will be a good wife to your son. Yes! whatever he may be to me, for your dear sake, as well as for his own, I will be a good wife to him. Hear my vow—I cannot think you dead. This is all I see—this beautiful, calm clay; but I know your spirit hovers near. Hear my vow. Hear me promise, with God's grace, to dedicate all my faculties of brain, and heart, and hands to his interest and happiness! to bear all things, to endure all things, to hope all things, even to the end of life, come what may." She stooped and sealed her vow by a farewell kiss upon the brow and lips of that beloved face, and reverently covered it, and, not to abuse her privilege by too long a stay, slowly left the room. She never saw that face again.

Within an hour afterwards, the company began to assemble in great crowds; for Mrs. Clifton was widely known, and greatly respected and beloved. The clergyman who was to perform the burial-service arrived, and the solemnity commenced. In the mean time, Catherine sat in her distant chamber, listening to the faint, inaudible sound of the minister's voice that reached her from afar, or else engaged in prayer, but always calmed, strengthened, and consoled. Many people at the funeral wondered greatly why the young bride had not appeared with her husband; but some one imagined it to be because she was too much overcome by sorrow to be present, and told it as a fact, which was at once believed and circulated; and that, like many another idle falsehood, satis-

factorily silenced conjecture. When the services were over, and the funeral procession had left the house for the graveyard—when Catherine felt that her more than mother was now indeed gone, gone, gone—she cast herself upon her bed in the last agony of sorrow.

Little household cares—what blessed though humble ministers to sorrow they are! gently drawing away the mourner from the contemplation of her grief, and compelling attention to themselves. So they give occupation, and induce forgetfulness, aiding in their humble way the great comforters, religion and time. An hour spent in bitter tears and sobs, and then the little domestic duties came hovering about her like little children, claiming her care. There was a large supper to be prepared, and bedchambers to be got ready for friends who had come from the remoter parts of the county, and who would therefore remain until the next morning; and so Catherine arose and refreshed herself with cold water and a change of dress, and went below stairs to superintend the operations of her cook and housemaids.

When everything was in readiness, she went into the drawing-room, where she received the returning visitors with a pensive, gentle dignity that won all their hearts, proud conservators of rank as they were. And that evening, young girl and new bride as she was, she presided at the head of the long table, filled with the county aristocrats, with all the ease and grace of a lady "to the manner born." Pre-occupied by one earnest thought and purpose, she never once remembered herself as a new-comer into their ranks, or troubled herself with the question of what might be their opinion of her. For the rest, her courtesy was graceful and dignified, because it was natural, and not assumed—the effect of benevolence and kindly social feeling, and not of pride, vanity, or ostentation.

The next morning, after breakfast, the guests departed; and many and cordial were the invitations to their houses extended to Catherine by all—even the haughtiest defenders of the sacredness of caste. Catherine received all these civilities with a gracious nobleness, that sat naturally and well upon her. And all this—the very evident esteem and respect of her neighbours, and the admirable manner in which Catherine received them—would have highly gratified the pride of Major Clifton, could anything except her exculpation from

suspicion have pleased him. As it was, he witnessed it all with a moody brow and sneering lip, and murmured to himself, "Better and better, Maria Theresa. You should have seen more of the world, before you threw your diplomatic talents away upon me and my country neighbours."

Well, at length they were all, to the very last guest, gone, and Major Clifton and Catherine were left alone—left standing together in the hall, whence they had seen the departures.

Catherine, hesitating between her fear of intruding upon his notice, and her dislike to leave him abruptly and rudely, stood—no longer self-possessed and noble, but with her eyes fixed upon the ground, and with the colour deepening in her cheek—in embarrassed silence, wishing that he might say something to her, something to explain the nature of that dark cloud that had arisen so strangely between them.

He broke the silence by saying coldly, "Mrs. Clifton—" She started and coloured, at hearing herself addressed by her new name. "It is my intention to make White Cliffs our future home. I desire that you be ready to accompany me thither to-morrow morning."

Catherine bowed her head in acquiescence; and, with a cold nod, he placed his hat upon his head, and walked forth.

Catherine went in, and occupied the remainder of the day in directing the labour of her servants, who were all employed in setting the house in order after the late confusing events, in packing away goods and covering up furniture, and in preparing generally for the closing up of the building.

CHAPTER XXXII.

DEDICATION.

The next morning after breakfast, the family-carriage was announced to take them to White Cliffs. Catherine put on her bonnet and shawl, and stood waiting, until Major Clifton, drawing on his gloves, came forward and attended her to the carriage-door. He handed her in, entered himself, took the seat opposite to her, and bade the coachman drive on. The whole distance between Hardbargain and White Cliffs was passed over in perfect silence by the parties; Major Clifton

preserving a stern gravity of demeanour, and Catherine scarcely daring to lift her eyes, lest she should encounter that severe but sorrowful gaze that almost broke her heart. She longed to inquire, "O Major Clifton! what is this that has arisen between us? Give the misery a name. Tell me." But the shyness and fear she had always felt in his presence, and doubly felt when he was reserved or displeased, and, above all, the bashfulness of new bridehood, forced her into silence.

At last the ride was over, and the carriage stopped before the main entrance of the mansion-house.

The plantation-labourers, in their holiday clothes, marshalled by the overseer, were assembled upon the lawn; and the house-servants in their "Sunday's best," with the housekeeper at their head, waited on the piazza "to pay their duty."

When the carriage had drawn up, Major Clifton alighted, and assisted his bride to get out. He led her up the marble stairs to the front door. The housekeeper, with a curtsey, stepped forward to attend her. But with the courteous kindness that Major Clifton seldom omitted, he waved her aside, merely saying, "Mrs. Mercer, send all these women about their duties, and tell Turnbull to disperse the men. I do not wish to be disturbed. There is my pocket-book: give them what they want—only let me be quiet."

"And give them my love and good wishes," murmured Catherine shyly, but not wishing to dismiss them so coldly; for her desolate heart had been comforted by the looks of sincere respect and affection with which they had seemed to receive and accept her as their new mistress.

Major Clifton merely threw up his chin with an assenting nod, muttering, "The popularity-seeking instinct of the diplomatist." He then conducted her into the drawing-room, led her up its whole length, and seated her upon a sofa with ironical ceremony, saying, "Mrs. Clifton, you are welcome to White Cliffs."

Startled by his tone, she looked up, lifting those long, drooping lashes, until her soft, dark eyes at last met his cold, rebuking gaze.

Then his whole aspect changed, and, from having been sarcastic and scornful, became grave and severe. Standing before her, he folded his arms, drew himself up, and, keeping

his eyes fixed steadily upon her face, said, "And now, lady, listen to me. The aim and object of your life is accomplished—consummated. You have at length attained the position to which you have long aspired, for which you have long, and deeply, and successfully played. You are numbered among the ladies of the county aristocracy. You bear the haughtiest name of all. You are Mrs. Clifton of Clifton."

All this time her eyes, wide open, dilated, fascinated by surprise and grief, met his stern gaze in sorrowful wonder.

He continued, "Yes, madam, you wear my name, such as it is; you rule my house, such as *it* is; but as for its poor master, lady, he is your most humble servant, but no lover!"

Her eyes fell beneath his sarcastic look, and she was tempted to wish herself dead.

He continued, "I leave here in a few days, for the purpose of raising a company to serve in the coming war with Great Britain. You will remain here at White Cliffs to take charge of affairs during my absence. If you really hoped to flaunt in the city this winter, I am sorry for your disappointment. But there are duties as well as dignities attending the position of the mistress of Clifton, and these must not be neglected. I shall exact their performance. The overseer and the farm-labourers, as well as the housekeeper and her assistants, have orders to obey you in everything. Good morning, madam." And so abruptly he turned upon his heel, and left her.

One moment she sat there amazed, confused, with her hands pressed upon her temples; and in another, losing all feeling for herself, feeling only for him, she sprang to his side, and caught his hand, exclaiming, "Stay! For the love of Heaven, stay one moment, only one moment, while you tell me! Oh, *after all*, have I made *you* unhappy?"

"Unhappy! You have been, and you are, the bane of my life!"

"How? Merciful Heaven, *how?* when I only wish to consecrate mine to you!"

"Do you dare to ask me?"

"Well! tell me! tell me! *How* can I remedy my fault—whatever it is? What can I do to comfort you?"

"Nothing but refrain from troubling me with your company or conversation, when it is not absolutely necessary. Again, good morning." And so he freed himself from her clasp, and left the room.

She tottered backwards, and fell into a chair; her head dropped upon her hands, and she gasped, "All-merciful Father, do not forsake me now, for I am desolate—I am desolate!" And she sat despairing, fallen, the very image of utter self-abandonment. She sat there until aroused by the voice of the housekeeper, who entered the room, came up to her side, and spoke to her twice before she heard; then, "What did you say?" she asked.

"I have come to receive your orders for the day, Mrs. Clifton."

"I— Please to manage to-day without my advice. I—I am not well, and very, very weary."

"You look so, indeed, madam. There is a fire kindled in your chamber, will you go up there, and lie down, and let me bring you a cup of tea?"

"No, I thank you. I am much obliged to you. But—only leave me here to rest."

The housekeeper went and closed the shutters, stirred the fire, set a screen between it and Catherine's seat, and quietly withdrew.

"Oh, this will never do!" said Catherine, trying to rouse herself from her stupor of despair. "This will never do. To-day I have made a bad beginning; but to-morrow I must rise, and be as active and efficient as if I were happy."

She met Major Clifton again at dinner. The meal passed almost in silence; and immediately after it was over, he took his hat and left the house. She did not see him again until tea-time, after which he went and spent the evening in his study. Catherine felt the need of calm thought, to understand her position and duties; and of prayer, to gain strength and patience to perform them. She spent several hours in reading the Scriptures, in meditation and in prayer; and then, comforted, retired to bed. She arose early the next morning, strengthened and consoled, with a very clear perception of her circumstances and responsibilities.

"My path through this intricate trouble is made very plain. I must discharge every domestic duty and every social obligation just as faithfully, if not as cheerfully, as though I were a happy wife," she said. And she went down stairs, and gave her orders for the day.

When Major Clifton came down into the breakfast-room, he found a quiet, cheerful scene—a sunny window, a bright

fire, a well-spread breakfast-table, and Catherine herself, in her simple morning-dress, looking calm and placid. There was an expression of curiously blended anger, and admiration, and amusement on his face, as he flapped his dressing-gown around him, and dropped himself into the easy-chair by the fire, giving her "Good morning," and hoping that she was well.

"As usual," replied Catherine, handing him the paper that had just come from the village, and ringing for breakfast.

When the meal was over, he reseated himself in the arm-chair, reading the newspaper, while Catherine still sat at the board, pouring out bowls of coffee, and filling plates with toast or muffins, to send to the old or sick among the negroes—these being always supplied with their meals from the mistress's table. Major Clifton glanced over the top of his paper at her, sometimes in irony, sometimes in sorrow, always in doubt; and she, unpleasant as his manner was, felt glad to have him near her. I really believe that she had rather he sat there and made faces at her than not sit there at all; and she felt lonesome and dreary when at last he left the room, put on his riding-coat, and left the house. As yesterday passed, so passed to-day—she meeting him only at meals; and so a week passed on. It is not easy to be very heroic for a day, or two, or three days; but when one day follows another, each with the same continuous, extraordinary demand for fortitude, it is strange indeed if heart and flesh do not fail under the task. Nothing but Divine Providence can give the requisite strength of endurance. In the presence of her husband, Catherine was calm and cheerful; but often in her private hours the sense of desolate bereavement would come over her, and gusts of tears and sobs would follow. These, like the summer gusts of blessed nature, would always refresh her, and she would be enabled again to take the comforting promises of the Bible to her heart, in her favourite text—"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God," and to ask God's blessing again upon her resolution "to perform every domestic and every social duty as faithfully, if not as cheerfully, as though she were a happy wife." And yet it was very hard to do this. It was very dreary to feel shut out from her husband's heart; to meet him every day with the

same stern, sorrowful brow, or, in variation of that, with the same ironical smile. It was difficult to go on with a repulsed and aching heart doing mere mechanical duty. She could not have done so but that two powerful principles sustained her—an invincible love for her husband, and an unwavering faith in God.

One morning, about two weeks after their arrival at home, Major Clifton sat alone, reading in his study, when the door opened, and Catherine entered. It was the first time that she had intruded there; and he looked up, threw aside his book, arose, and pushed back his chair with a look of annoyance.

"Excuse me for interrupting you, but may I speak to you for a few minutes?"

"Speak on, madam, but oblige me by being brief. Pardon me—take a seat," he said, handing her a chair, and resuming his own.

Catherine sat down, felt the approach of another fit of sobs and tears, but restrained herself, and said quietly, "Major Clifton, whatever this is between us—"

"I must remind you that this is a prohibited subject of discussion, madam," he said, interrupting her.

"I will not talk of it again—how can I, indeed, when I do not know what it is?"

He made a gesture of angry disbelief, and begged her to come at once to the object of her visit.

"Well, then, I wished only at first to say that, whatever be the cause of this cruel misunderstanding between us, it will pass away. You look at me in surprise and doubt; but it will, Major Clifton—it will, it must: there is no truth and reality in it, and it must be temporary. I have thought it all over very sadly, but very calmly and clearly, and I know that it must be transient. My faith bridges over this impracticable present in our lives, and I see the future, when you will understand me. I never did anything to offend you in my life. And God, to whom I have committed our cause, knows my innocence, and in His good time He will make it plain. It must be so. The promise of the All-Merciful, the Almighty Father, is pledged to the Right!"

He turned away from her, with a stamp of fierce displeasure. He turned away from her savagely, because he felt that, had he looked and listened a moment longer, he should have abjured all his evil thoughts, and snatched her to his

bosom—she was so patient, so hopeful, so beautiful with truth and love, that he could scarcely resist the impulse to fold her to his heart—false as he deemed her to be. As it was, he suppressed the true instinct—obeyed the false suspicion, and, turning again sharply upon her, demanded to know, once for all, to what this new piece of hypocrisy tended.

"I mean this, Major Clifton—that as our estrangement must needs be transient, do not, under its influence, let us do, or omit to do, anything that may hereafter affect unhappily our social relations with others."

"As how, Mrs. Clifton?"

"Thus. The county families have all called upon us. It is high time that we return their visits, if we mean to keep up the connexion."

"Oh! ay! Excellently well thought of, Maria Theresa!" he sneered.

With a passing look of distress, she said, "I only fear that our pleasant intercourse with the neighbours may not be so easily resumed, if they have reason to suppose that we treat them with indifference and neglect."

"Admirably calculated, madam! A contingency has presented itself to your diplomatic wisdom that never would have occurred to my simpler mind. So, you wish to confirm your position, and extend your connexion here in the county! Well! the aristocrats of R—— have certainly taken you up with a zeal and determination that is surprising; but when they have once made up their haughty minds to patronise a new-comer, it is wonderful to what length they will go. But you may thank your own fine diplomatic talents for that!"

"Diplomatic talents! What diplomatic talents? So many people have thrust that questionable greatness upon me that it mortifies me. No—I know the only value and currency I have among the county people is the value you have given me—the stamps of your name and rank; and I—I do not wish to disparage it. I wish to appear worthy of it—that is all."

"And you really believe what you say?"

"Truly, I do."

Again she looked so lovely, in her truth and humility, that he was almost tempted to relent; and again the impulse only made him more unjust.

"In a word, madam, what do you wish me to do? for I begin to weary of this discussion. Nor is it well to subject myself to the influence of your fascinations; for I candidly admit to you that I am sensible of them, as others have been."

"I only wished to propose to you to take a day, and drive round the neighbourhood with me, to return the calls that have been made upon us."

"Very well, madam. I am at your commands whenever you please to call upon me for that service. When do you propose to go?"

"At your earliest convenience."

"Will to-morrow do?"

"If you please."

"To-morrow, then, let it be. And now, Mrs. Clifton, have you any further commands for me?"

"Thank you—no," she answered very sadly, and turned to leave the room—hesitated, came back, and, resting her hand upon the study-table for support, because she was trembling, said, "Forgive me—and let me speak to you one more word, will you?"

"What is it?"

"It is so sorrowful to be misunderstood. Please do not mistake me in this matter. For myself, I do not care to follow up my acquaintance with these county people. I have lived all my life without extensive social intercourse. I have lived all my life in strict domestic retirement. I am so used to it that it is natural and agreeable to me. Indeed, I prefer it; but—"

"Well?"

She was suddenly silent. She wished to say, "But with you it is otherwise. Living in the county, you need, or will hereafter need, an extensive neighbourhood connexion; and, for your sake, I would not alienate these people by neglect." But she could not say it. Her old shyness, and a delicate fear of seeming to wish to place him under an obligation, kept her mute.

"[illegible], Mrs. Clifton? If such seclusion is so agreeable to you, why do you wish to change it?"

"I owe the ladies some acknowledgment of their civility to us."

"Have you anything farther to say to me?"

"No," said Catherine; and, with an involuntary gesture of pain and distress, she turned and left the room, with all her generous thoughts unspoken. When the door had closed behind her, Archer Clifton started up, struck his clenched hands to his forehead, and, pacing up and down the floor, distractedly exclaimed, "I love her! I love her! It's no use, I *do* love her! Every day more deeply and desperately I love her! In her presence, all her unworthiness is forgotten or disbelieved! Yes! yes! her deep hypocrisy, her black ingratitude, my mother's wrongs—all, all are lost to memory! Just now I could have snatched her to my bosom and wept over her falsehood, rather than have cast her from me. Yes, more! I could have implored her forgiveness for ever believing in that guilt which is but too well proved! I love her! She is the pulse of my heart! the soul of my life! She embodies all the meaning of existence to me! Heart and brain—yes!—body, soul, and spirit starve, perish for a full reconciliation and a perfect union with her! She is lovely, she is beautiful to me! She always was! Yet, oh—apple of Sodom that she is! shall I take such falsehood and corruption to my heart? I must leave the house—must leave the neighbourhood; for here I wilt and wither! And she! how *can* she bear it? for I think, with all her falseness, she loves me very much. How *can* she bear life so? How can she rise each morning and go through all the occupations of the day so regularly, quietly, cheerfully, day after day?—omitting no duty, domestic or social, small or great, from the stitching my ripped gloves to the keeping up of the county connexion, in sooth! While I, I daily wither in this moral mildew—idle, despairing, forgetting all my obligations—forgetting that my country needs my arm! This cannot last! This must not be! I must get away from here. I must raise a volunteer company, and offer myself to the Government, and in the tumult of the campaign find forgetfulness or a grave!"

Unable to compose himself again that morning, he rang the bell, ordered his horse, seized his hat, went out, mounted, and rode away.

The next morning Catherine arose early, and among her orders for the day directed that the carriage should be at the door by ten o'clock. At the appointed hour she attired her-

self with care and taste, and went down into the front hall, where she found Major Clifton in readiness to attend her. They entered the carriage and set out, and, in the course of a drive of five or six hours' duration, made the circuit of the neighbourhood, calling upon several families; and everywhere Catherine was received with distinguished respect. They reached home again about the middle of the afternoon.

The next few days passed on in the usual dreary routine—except that Catherine knew Major Clifton was out riding every day and all day, and that he was in his study writing half the night. She did not know what this portended until one morning he said to her, "Mrs. Clifton, you will oblige me by having my wardrobe prepared and packed at your earliest convenience. I have orders to join the —— regiment, within a week."

Catherine turned very pale and reeled as if she would have fallen, but grasped the chair and steadied herself, till strength returned.

"All shall be ready for you," she replied.

And he, with a cold bow of acknowledgment, went his way.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"THE MEEKNESS OF LOVE."

CATHERINE remained seated in the chair into which she had sunk, with her face buried in her open palms. Her favourite maid Henny, from the Hardbargain farmhouse, was in attendance. Henny had cleared away the breakfast-service, with the exception of the silver plate, which was collected upon a salver; and she stood by her mistress's chair, waiting in respectful sympathy. At last she said, "Miss Kate, honey, if you lend me the keys o' the plate-closet, I can put away the things safe, without your troublin' o' yourself."

Catherine lifted her head languidly, and, pushing away her drooping hair, exclaimed quite unconsciously, and as if the words burst of themselves from her overburdened bosom, "O Henny! if you knew how little heart I have to do anything!"

"I *does* know it, missis, deary; but you mus' jes take a 'flection on to it, honey, an' 'sider how it ain't on'y marster, but mos' in general all the gemmun in the neighbourhood as is gwine for the wars."

Regretting that she had permitted a complaint to escape her lips, yet satisfied that her servant did not understand or suspect the true cause of her sorrow, Catherine arose, and said, "Take up the salver and follow me, Henny. Idle grief is very fruitless. If we cannot keep our friends with us, it is better to prepare for their comfortable living while absent than to sit down in useless sorrow."

"An' that's the Lord's trufe, Miss Kate," said Henny, lifting the laden salver on her head, and settling it steadily; "that's Marster's blessed trufe! 'Sides which, I has a heap to do myself, to get brother Jack's duds ready, to go long o' Marse Archy."

"Is your brother going with Major Clifton, Henny?"

"'Deed he is, honey—gwine to ride body-servant long o' marster, to wait on him in camp; likewise in field o' battle, to hold his t'other horse, in case his whichest one should be shot unnerneaf of him. O Lord Marster Jesus! what a thing that is to think of! Likewise in soldier's newniform, on the bay horse Billy; which brother Jack would sell his mortal soul any time for the sake o' dressing fine, an' ridin' a horseback—cussed, infunnelly fool! I axes your pardon, Miss Kate; don't look so 'noyed, honey; I won't use bad words again—'deed, 'fore my blessed, Hebbenly Marster, won't I, honey; but it is so aggravoking, when I comes to think o' what a slave I've made o' myself to brother Jack, ever since mother died, and the 'turn he makes me for it, wantin' to go gallivauntin' off to the wars in soldier's clothes an' a long tailed horse! Here has I been 'jecting some o' the most illegible coloured men in the neighbourhood, an' bein' of an old maid, sake o' takin' care o' him, 'cause he's delicy in his health, an' he to be wantin' to go leave me! An' he, with a 'sumption in his breas', to want to go; 'sposing of hisself gettin' his feet wet sogerin'! An' he 'blige to wear a tar plaster on his ches', to be campin' out an' layin' on the naked yeth! An' knows he can't congest nothin' but rabbits an' partridges, an' wants to go where he'll have to live offen roas' taters, like Gin'al Marion an' his men, in the Resolutionary War! It mos'—mos'—mos' breaks my heart!"

And with that Henny set down the salver and began to cry, while her mistress opened the plate-closet.

"Put them in, Henny, and I will see what can be done for you afterwards," said Catherine.

Henny obeyed, and then said, as they left the room, "If you could 'suade Marse Archy to leave poor Jack, poor sickly fellow! at home, an' take some o' the other young niggers, der ain't one o' them but 'ould be 'joyed to go. Der's Dandy, now, 'ould be willin' to go to his everlastin' ruination, 'sake o' ridin' body-servant long o' marster."

"I will speak to Major Clifton, Henny. You know him to be kind and considerate. And I am sure he is not aware of Jack's pulmonary affection."

"Yes, he is, Miss Kate, honey! 'Deed he knows all about Jack's 'fection for him! High, honey! ain't Jack been own man to Marse Archy ever since they was boys together? An' didn't Jack wait on him when he wur at college, and ole missis pay extra for him? 'Deed she did, honey! 'Fore my blessed Hebbenly Lord, did she! An' he knows all 'bout Jack's 'fection for him, and he knows Jack 'ould follow him to the ind o' the world, an' jump off arter him! Lord love your heart, Miss Kate, ther' ain't no dog marster's got loves him more faithful 'an brother Jack does."

Kate sighed very deeply, with a preoccupied air, but answered, "I will speak to Major Clifton in your behalf, Henny, Now go and ask Mrs. Mercer to come to me in my own chamber."

And Catherine passed on to her own apartment, and Henny went her errand. Very soon the housekeeper entered the chamber, and found Catherine busily engaged among linen, stockings, cravats, and other "belongings."

"I want your assistance, Mrs. Mercer, in preparing Major Clifton's wardrobe this week."

"My dear child, I am so sorry! But I have been waiting for an hour to speak to you. The truth is, I have just got a letter from my son-in-law, who writes that my daughter is very, extremely low, with the bilious pleurisy, and wants me to come right over to L—— immediately, without loss of time; and I thought I would ask you for a leave of absence till she got better."

"And certainly I could not refuse it, Mrs. Mercer. I am sorry your daughter is ill."

"And, my dear child, I was going to ask you if you could let me have one of the mules this morning, and I would send it back to-morrow."

"The weather is too cold, and the journey too arduous for a woman of your age to perform it in that manner. Tell Dandy to put the horses to the carriage for you."

"The carriage, dear honey!—I shouldn't think of such a thing. As many years as I have been living in the family, I never used the carriage once. The mule will do very well, if you will let me order him."

"Mrs. Mercer, why not? I shall not want it to-day. To-morrow, Dandy can bring it home."

"God bless you, child! you are so good-hearted! It is a sin, too, to leave you, so thronged as you are with work."

"No, I can get—get through," replied Kate, with the same troubled, preoccupied air that had marked her manner the whole morning. Mrs. Mercer soon after took leave and departed.

An hour after this, Catherine heard Major Clifton enter the hall-door and come up stairs. To her surprise, he paused before her chamber-door and rapped. When she opened it, he said, "Will you favour me with your company in my study for a few minutes, Mrs. Clifton?"

Catherine immediately laid down her work and followed him.

When they reached the study, he set her a chair near the writing-table, and, dropping into another, drew a portfolio before him, opened it, and, turning out a number of papers, said, "Mrs. Clifton, I told you, some weeks since, that at my departure, and during my indefinite absence, I should be obliged to leave this estate under your charge?"

"Yes," answered Catherine attentively.

"I am well aware that it is undoubtedly an onerous burden and responsibility for one so young; but when you feel it so, remember that you yourself courted the position, and must be content to take the toils with the honours, real or imaginary."

Passing over his bitter jibe, Catherine said, "You need not doubt, in leaving all to my care, that all will go well. I am not twenty yet, it is true, but I have had much work and much experience for my age; so that every year I have lived

since ten years old has counted double. You need suffer no anxiety in trusting me."

He looked at her countenance, at once noble and meek in expression; he remembered the life of toil, self-denial, and devotion she had lived; he even recollected a certain text of Scripture which said, "By their fruits ye shall know them: do men gather thorns of fig-trees?" But the demon of cherished suspicion whispered, "'Twas all done for a purpose;" and he hardened his heart, and replied, "Oh, madam, I have no doubt or hesitation in placing the plantation under your care, and I shall have no anxiety in leaving it so for an indefinite period—not only because I have much faith in your natural talents and acquired experience, but also because I have more confidence in your self-love; and, knowing that you know our interests in the prosperity of this estate to be identical, I rest assured that you will do for it your very best."

"He—in all other circumstances and to all other people so noble, so liberal, so charitable—he never speaks to me but to upbraid me!" was the thought that presented itself to Catherine's mind; but, with the loyalty of her nature, she repelled it, saying within herself, "It is because he has what he thinks condemning evidence of my unworthiness! Would he but charge me? would he but tell me what it is?"

"Will you give me your attention, Mrs. Clifton?" he asked, breaking into her sad reverie.

Catherine bowed gently.

And he took down the "farm-book" from a shelf, opened it, and, laying it before her, entered upon a series of details and explanations on both debt and credit sides of the accounts, with which it is not necessary to trouble the reader. After two or three hours spent in looking over bills, comparing them with receipts, calculating results, &c., he closed the book, replaced the papers in the portfolio, and, turning round to Catherine, said, "You understand now?"

"Yes, perfectly."

"As for these heavy notes that will fall due the first of January, you must contrive an interview with the holders, and get them renewed upon security—as I said before, remember."

"I shall not forget."

"No, or if you do, the holders of the notes will bring them to your recollection in not the pleasantest manner. And, now, Mrs. Clifton, I wish you to keep a vigilant eye over Turnbull, and hold him to a strict account. I suspect the man. I never have been able to understand how, with such a heavy force of negroes on this plantation, it has been necessary to hire about a baker's dozen of white labourers, all of them, you understand, his own relations—brothers, sons, and nephews! I have reason to mistrust the fellow, but no time to look after him. Hold him to a strict account, Catherine."

"Suppose, for the coming year, you should place my brother Carl here as overseer? You have tested his skill and probity."

This was a very unlucky proposition on Catherine's part. He sat back in his chair, and, looking at her in steady scorn, said, "Yes, madam, I have 'tested his skill and probity,' and know so well the degree of the former, and the quality of the latter, that I have already forbidden him to set foot on my premises or speak to my wife. Do you dare to think that I am your dupe, or his? And, now, hear me: In all the directions that I have given you, I have simply desired or requested you to do this or that; but in this matter of your perfidious brother Carl, I command you to hold no intercourse with him whatever."

"You shall be obeyed," said Catherine, "you shall be obeyed;" and she thought—"Your simplest wish, expressed to that effect, would have had all the power of this arbitrary command"—but she did not say it. She was never free of speech, least of all to him. And now he rose, as if to conclude the interview. And she recollected her promise to Henny, to intercede for Jack; and always more courageous in the cause of any, even the humblest, than in her own, she gently detained him, by saying, "I wished to speak to you about the servant you intend to take with you."

"Jack?"

"Yes. You were not home last winter, and you do not know that he was sick with a cough the whole winter, and that he is consumptive."

"I have sometimes thought so, however. Well?"

"Indeed I feel that it is properly no business of mine,

and I beg you will excuse my interference. I would not willingly, I am sure—"

"To the point, if you please, Mrs. Clifton."

"Well, I am afraid that if you take him, and expose him to the unavoidable hardships of campaign life, he will fall sick on your hands, and, instead of being a help, be a hindrance. Therefore, it is much more for your sake than for the boy's own that I should be pleased if you would leave him here and take another."

"There is much reason in what you have advanced, Mrs. Clifton. Yet, among all the negroes on the place, there is none but Jack who seems fit for the duty; the others are all too young or too old, or too hopelessly stupid and lumbering."

"There is Dandy, a handsome, likely mulatto, strong and intelligent, dressy and enterprising, the very man for an officer's servant; he would be very proud and glad to attend you."

"Oh! ay! I know that he is anxious to go; but he is your carriage-driver and waiter, Catherine, and I cannot think of depriving you of him."

"There are other careful drivers on the place. Please take him with you."

"Yes, but those other careful drivers are awkward, ill-looking farm-labourers, accustomed to driving and hallooing after ox-teams."

"Have I been so long used to a carriage as to be choice in my coachman, then? Please do not think of that."

"And then he is your waiter and messenger."

"Oh, believe me, I do not need him. Pray take him with you. He is so active, intelligent, and faithful that he will be of inestimable value to you in the campaign."

"It is precisely because he is so active, intelligent, and faithful that I am unwilling to deprive you of his services, Catherine—I beg your pardon—Mrs. Clifton," he corrected himself, suddenly changing his involuntarily relenting manner into the old sarcasm and scorn.

"Oh, call me Catherine! please call me Catherine!" she said, losing half her reserve.

"Why? Do you dislike the other name?"

"No—I like it. I am proud of it—not because it is a high, haughty name, but because it is yours. When other

people call me 'Mrs. Clifton,' my heart springs with pride and joy; but when you call me so—"

"Ah, now, do not let us grow sentimental, madam! I prefer to call you Mrs. Clifton because I think that the fancied dignity for which you have toiled and plotted so long, and patiently, and successfully, should be constantly brought to your mind."

With a deprecating, imploring gesture, and a brow crimsoned until the purple veins started out, Catherine, pierced by this keen sarcasm, sank into a chair.

Unpityingly he added, "And now, Mrs. Clifton, I really must intreat you to excuse me. I expect Turnbull here every instant, to have a talk about the stock."

Catherine arose, trembling, and left the room; one agonising complaint bursting from her tortured bosom, "Oh, I would to Heaven this were over some way!"

He looked after her with a countenance convulsed with sorrow, groaning, "And so would I! And so would I to God that this were over somehow! Oh!" he thought, rising again, and pacing the floor, "there is nothing in life so humiliating to an honourable-minded man as to love and live with a perfidious woman, to be daily tempted by his own heart and her blandishment to become her dupe and his own scorn—to be hourly on the brink of clasping just so much proved treachery as her form conceals, to a half-loving, half-loathing bosom! Serpents! Yes, I dreamed of a serpent last night. Methought I was in the forests of Brazil, and the fatal cobra-di-capello had coiled itself around my neck, and raised its horrid head to mine; and I went to snatch the deadly reptile away, and found it to be only Catherine's gentle arms and noble face. Devils! Never did a demon hide itself under a more deceptive form and face! with that saint-like blending of nobility and meekness in her countenance. Every time she talks with me, she brings me to the very brink of abjuring my sincere convictions. I must get away from this place, or my mind will become unsettled, deranged. I must hasten my departure, and in the meantime she shall not talk with me again. She shall not cross the threshold of this room again; or if she does, she shall meet with such a reception that she shall speedily retire." And so, torn with passion, he walked and raved; while Catherine sought her room, and threw herself upon

the bed, giving way to a burst of tears and sobs, and crying in wild rebellion, "God! O God! infinite in power and love, do you see me? Do you see me and withhold your help? O God! God!" But soon upon the fevered spirit fell the word of the Lord like dew. "All things worketh together for good to them that love the Lord." And full of penitence for her impatience, she knelt and humbled herself "under the mighty hand of God;" and then, comforted with love and hope, strengthened with faith and courage, she arose, and went about her work.

Meeting Henny soon after, she told her to be consoled, for that she thought Jack would be let off.

In the afternoon she received a pencilled note from Major Clifton, announcing that he should leave home three days sooner than he had anticipated—namely, on the third day from that date. Leaning against the projecting chimney-piece, she held the note, stupidly gazing at it. But two days were left before he should depart, then, she thought—and he was going, really going upon a long and perilous military service, and parting with her in deep, unmitigated anger, under the seemingly ineffaceable impression of her utter unworthiness, believing her to be guilty of—what? ay! what?—for up to this moment she had not the slightest idea of his reason for condemning her.

And now she blamed herself for cowardice, in having hesitated to intreat him to inform her of what fault or of what crime she was suspected, and to give her the opportunity of exculpating herself; and she reproached herself for that failing of the heart, and falling of the eyes, and faltering of the voice, that made her so powerless, and placed her at such a disadvantage in his presence. "Oh, yes, indeed," she said, "I know my manner is enough to convict me. I do not wonder at nor blame him for thinking ill of me, so long as my eyes sink beneath his look. But how can I help it? It must be so while he frowns or sneers. One encouraging word or glance from him, and I could look up and speak." And next she remembered how much he must suffer in continuing to think her unworthy, and in departing under that impression; and at this thought, all that was most generous and benevolent in her nature arose to inspire her with courage, and she resolved to go to him, and, though heart and frame should tremble to meet that dread look of stern

sorrow or piercing scorn, to persevere in imploring him to tell her with what crime she stood charged.

But though she had determined upon this act, it was extremely difficult to perform it. All the afternoon and evening he came and went in such hurry, and seemed so entrenched behind his own private thoughts and purposes, that she feared to break in upon his reserve. Once, indeed, for the purpose of speaking to him upon the subject, she entered his study, and stood by the table; but he turned around, drew himself up, sat back in his chair, and looked upon her with such sarcastic arrogance, that, abashed and confounded, without opening her lips she turned and left the room.

And so the afternoon and evening passed; and the next day, the last of his stay, arrived. All day Catherine sought an opportunity of speaking with him alone. In vain! He was resolved to afford her none. He sedulously avoided her. As a last resort she wrote a note, requesting an interview, and sent it to him. She received an answer stating that his time for the day was all pre-engaged. And so this last day also passed. That night she completed her part in the preparations for his departure, and retired late to a sleepless bed. She heard him come in very late, and enter his room, which joined her own.

At early dawn she arose and looked at the time-piece on her chamber mantle-shelf. It was but five o'clock. He was not to leave till ten. There were five precious hours left yet. And oh! how inestimably precious if in them she could effect a reconciliation with her husband! They were like the last hours of a dying one, with salvation staked upon them. She felt that the crisis had come, that she must not falter now. She knelt and prayed for strength and courage, as we only pray a few times in life, with that impassioned earnestness of supplication that ever brings an angel down "strengthening" us. Then encouraged, she arose, completed her simple toilet, and went down stairs to her morning duties. The breakfast-hour was seven. And oh! she watched the clock as, unjustly condemned to death, she might watch in the last fleeting hours preceding execution, hoping, still hoping, for some saving revelation. A little while after seven he came down stairs, entered the breakfast-room, and bowing, with his usual cold greeting of "Good morning, madam," sat down.

She rang for the coffee, and then took her place at the head of the table.

He went through with the morning meal with his customary reflective leisure. And Catherine watched the hand of the clock as it travelled on towards eight. She was sick with apprehension. She could not speak to him there, for the servants were in attendance. At last he rose, left the table, and went out to give some final directions concerning his baggage, and the horses and servants he was to take with him; and then he went up stairs and entered his study. It was just eight o'clock, and she had two invaluable hours left yet. As if life and death hung upon their issue, she resolved, come what might, to use them in a final effort for a reconciliation. Pale, and trembling in every limb, she left the table, and went up stairs slowly, holding by the balustrades from weakness. When she reached the study-door, she found it ajar, and through it she saw him sitting at his writing-table—not busy, as she had feared and expected to find him, but doing absolutely nothing, with his elbows resting on the table, and his face buried in the palms of his hands, in the attitude and expression of the deepest sorrow and despair. That one glimpse of his suffering face sufficed to drive every fear but that of anxious affection from her heart. "It is because he thinks me unworthy. I must not leave him to think so longer. Be strong, coward heart!" she said to herself; and then she went in and stood beside his chair, resting her hand for support upon the table, trembling with nervous weakness, and blushing with the bashfulness she could not but feel in making this advance, and altogether, in his suspicious eyes, looking very much like a conscious culprit. She stood, unable to utter one word, until he lifted up his head, and, seeing her, demanded coldly, "What is your pleasure, Mrs. Clifton?"

She attempted to speak, but a mute sob was all that ensued.

With a piercing sarcasm, he asked, "Can I serve you in any manner this morning, madam?"

With a gesture of deprecation and intreaty, she answered, "Yes! yes! I wish to be put upon my trial! Archer! Major Clifton! you withdrew your favour from me so suddenly. You never told me why. Oh! tell me, before you go, how I have been so wretched as to lose your esteem, and put me upon my defence."

He frowned darkly, as with both pain and anger, and replied, "I have had occasion twice before to remind you, Mrs. Clifton, that this is a prohibited subject of conversation between us."

She clasped her hands, in the earnestness of supplication, exclaiming, "Why? Oh! why? You were always just. You never judged your poorest slave unheard. Oh! what have I done, or omitted to do? Tell me! Make the charge, and see how I can answer it. Archer—I mean, Major Clifton—forgive it; but for all, it springs so naturally from heart to lip to call you Archer, because—because there is no feeling of estrangement in my heart, nor can I make it there! Major Clifton, then, consider the greatest criminals have the right of a trial with the crime of which they are suspected, distinctly and openly charged upon them, with the evidence on both sides taken, and their defence heard before they are condemned. I know that you would not be otherwise than just. Will you condemn me untried, unjudged, unheard?"

"It is quite sufficient for me, madam," he answered haughtily, "that the proofs of your turpitude are conclusive to my own mind."

"I know it," she said meekly, "I know it—yet pause. What would you think of the justice of a judge who should say to one suspected of crime, 'Your guilt is so clear that it is useless to charge you with it, or to hear the testimony, or to listen to what you might have to say in your defence,' and so proceed to condemn him? Such things were never, surely, done in the darkest ages, or under the most despotic rulers; and is that guilt of which I am suspected of so heinous a character as to preclude me from the privilege extended even to criminals—the privilege of a trial?" She paused; but he continued to regard her with a stern, set face, without replying. Drooping over the table, and leaning heavily upon it, she spoke again, and her voice fell in low, but clear, melodious tones, as she said, "God and man, and I myself, have made you my judge, and the arbiter of my destiny here. It is an awful power; you have made me feel it to be such. It is an awful power because it is a subtle, invisible power—higher, and deeper, and broader than any law. I have no appeal from it—none! Nor, please to understand me, do I wish for any; for, if all the world were to clear me, I should still be condemned if you condemned me. And oh! listen

and believe me—believe me, for it is from my deep heart that I speak this truth—if you had the power and the will to doom me to death, my instincts would teach me rather to receive death at your hands than to save my life by appealing from your judgment to another tribunal. I am loyal; I am faithful! God knoweth that I am. Let me prove it; put me upon my defence. Do not—oh, do not persist in condemning me unheard."

"Catherine," he answered in a softened voice, "you are not condemned; if you were, you would not be standing here at my side."

"What do you mean? Good Heaven!"

"This," he replied with a sudden change of manner, as though angry with himself for his transient relenting. "This! that oftentimes it happens that the only mercy we can show the guilty is not to bring them to trial. To openly recognise guilt is to be obliged to punish it. If we distinctly accuse, we are bound to prove; and, if we prove, to condemn and sentence."

"And is my case such an one?"

"Your case is such an one."

"Yet still I beg to be tried; for if not to try them is often the only way to save the guilty, to try them is oftener the only way to clear the innocent. Accuse me, hear my defence, and be yourself my judge. I ask no other."

"Of what avail were it to rehearse your acts of falsehood and treachery? You know them this moment even better than I do."

"Falsehood and treachery? Just Heaven!"

"Yes, madam, those were the words I used."

"You are mistaken in attributing such wickedness to me But tell me the grounds of your suspicions; doubtless I can explain them, and clear myself."

He laughed a scornful, sardonic laugh, and replied, "Oh! doubtless a woman of your diplomatic genius is fertile in explanations. Whether you could by possibility clear yourself is another question; for I speak not of suspicions, but of positive knowledge."

His strong conviction of her turpitude infected her with despair at last. She said very mournfully, "I know that it has sometimes happened that the innocent have been tried and convicted—overwhelmed by a mass of circumstantial

evidence—and that may be my case; nevertheless, even they have had the poor satisfaction of knowing for what they suffered. Tell me, I beseech you! I will still hope that I can acquit myself; not for my own sake, Archer, dear Archer, but for yours: it must be so agonising to be forced to think ill of one we have loved as you once loved me. I suffer very much in the loss of your esteem; but were it possible for our cases to be reversed—were I forced to think evil of you—I do not know, indeed I do not know how I could go on with daily life at all!"

"I think you had better cease discoursing and retire; your diplomatic talent is not in high action this morning—you permit your words to betray you."

"To betray me!"

"Yes, madam; for if you felt yourself to be innocent, would you not necessarily think very ill of me for treating you as a guilty woman?"

"No, no! I know that to have condemned me so promptly, so unequivocally, you must have what you think proof positive against me. But produce it! I am innocent—indeed I am, Archer. I believe in Heaven's justice; I believe that, if I call on the Lord, He will, sooner or later, in His own good time, enable me to prove it."

"I will produce the testimony," he said, going to an escritoir, opening it, and taking from it a note in a grey envelope. Returning to his seat, he laid it before her, asking, "Is this your handwriting?"

Catherine glanced at it: it was the envelope she had directed to Mrs. Georgia Clifton, and she immediately answered, "Yes, certainly it is."

"Ah, it is. When was it written?"

"The last day of your dear mother's life. Ah, now I remember! It was from that day you took your favour from me."

"Yes, madam," he said, withdrawing the fatal note from the envelope and laying it before her, adding, "Do you acknowledge this as your writing also?"

Catherine looked at the note without heeding the words, and, raising her innocent eyes with wonder to his face, answered, without an instant's hesitation, "Yes, assuredly that is mine!"

Her perfect unconsciousness should have convinced him of

her innocence—would have done so, perhaps, but that, prejudiced against her, he took her manner to be super-refined art; and, determined to force her to the point, he said, "Would you swear it?"

Catherine took up the letter and examined it.

"Ay! read it, read it!"

Catherine read the note, turned deadly pale, fell back in her chair, and let the paper drop from her hands, overwhelmed by the enormous wickedness of the forgery. Scarcely restraining a bitter curse, he picked up the fatal note, pushed the door open with his foot, crossed the hall, and entered his bed-chamber, banging the door after him.

One stunned moment she sat thus, then started to her feet, bewildered, distracted, and with a wild impulse fled across the hall and into his chamber, and sank at his feet speechless, mute, but catching his hand and clinging to it. When she struggled and recovered her voice, she exclaimed simply, "I did not write that letter, Archer! I did not write that letter!"

He twisted his hand rudely out of her grasp, and turned away without reply.

She clasped her hands earnestly, exclaiming again, "I did not write that letter! It is impossible I ever should have conceived, much less have written such a letter. I do not know who wrote it. I never laid my eyes on it before!"

An incredulous, insulting smile was his reply.

"Oh! what shall I say to convince you? Indeed, indeed I did not do it!"

"Come, perjure yourself! Swear it."

She was silent.

"I ask you to swear it."

She was still silent.

"Come, now, will you declare upon oath that you did not write that letter?"

"God sees me! I did not!"

"That's no oath! Here's the New Testament—swear upon the Holy Evangelists of Almighty God that you didn't write it, and perhaps I will believe you; for well I know that many unprincipled people have a sort of fearful respect for an oath, which in them is not piety but superstition. I think you just such an one. Come, now, swear that you did not write it!" He paused for an answer, but she looked at him in great trouble. "Will you do it?"

"Major Clifton, I cannot!"

"Not swear that you did not write it?"

"No, sir!"

"Then that only confirms and seals the truth of what I knew before—that, of course, you did write it."

She wrung her hands in deep distress and said, "I cannot swear, Archer—I mean, I dare not swear, Archer—even to prove my innocence, and get back your love."

"And why, pray?" he asked, with a mocking smile.

"O Archer! my Lord and yours has commanded us to to 'Swear not at all.' I dare not break that command."

"Tush, girl, you are clumsy! Do you presume to think I can be duped by that affectation of super-righteousness?"

"O Heaven! O Heaven! what shall I do?" said Catherine, in despair.

"Swear, and I will believe you," he answered mockingly.

"Oh, why will not my simple word do? Oh, do you think I would tell a falsehood even to save my life?"

"Do I? Does not an astute diplomatist, like you, know that *I* know a woman who can be false, treacherous, hypocritical—who, so young, can plot so well, and succeed so entirely—can also tell a falsehood to conceal her baseness?" he answered, looking down upon her in insufferable scorn.

Then her whole manner changed. She arose to her feet with a certain calm and gentle dignity, and, pushing back the veiling tresses from her noble brow, answered nobly, "Yes, it is true! If I could have conceived such treachery, and written such a letter as that, I could also have lied to conceal it! There is only one on earth that knows my innocence—the writer of that letter. But one in heaven knows it, and He will make it manifest. I believe in miracles, because I believe in the infinite power and goodness of God, and in the everlasting promises of the Bible."

"Well done, Maria Theresa! really, that is the best of all! Indeed, your talents are quite lost upon such unworthy game as me and my poor estate. Good-bye!" and, laughing bitterly, he left the room, and hurried down stairs. A few minutes after, she heard the clock strike ten; then she arose and went to the window to look out. He stood upon the lawn, in riding-gear, near a group consisting of his servant Dandy, and three saddle-horses. She saw him vault into his saddle and ride away, attended by Dandy, mounted on one

horse and leading another. As he passed the outer gate, one look of love, sorrow, and despair he turned towards her window, and then vanished into the forest-road.

She did not see that look—she could not, at that distance—she saw that he was gone; and, turning from the window, she sank down upon the carpet in the deepest sorrow.

Gone! He was gone! His presence, that had made all suffering tolerable, was withdrawn, and the place was empty—life itself was empty.

He was gone, gone—not lovingly, after a lingering, tender leave-taking—that would have been sorrowful enough; but it would have been cheered by the promise of frequent interchange of letters, and the anticipation of re-union. How much more sorrowful this utter separation!

Gone! gone! not in anger—that would have been bitter indeed; but it would have been sweetened by hope that anger would subside, that reflection would come, and reconciliation ensue. But how much bitterer this hopeless disunion!

Gone in scorn! Gone in loathing! Gone to return no more but as a stranger! Oh, insupportable grief! Oh, hopeless anguish! Oh, despair!

A few short weeks ago the heaven of her life had been so serene, so divinely serene, and her soul had reflected back the beautiful "great calm," as a still lake the clear sky.

Now all was changed! Now all was clouds, and storm, and darkness! A howling wilderness around! a howling tempest overhead! And her soul answered back the tempestuous discord of life, as the storm-tossed ocean the storm-lowered sky! All was confusion, distraction, chaos!

Wild impulses—suggestions of the fiend—darted meteor-like athwart her mind: to fly, to go away, and leave a place where she had been brought a bride, full of love, and hope, and trust, and where every feeling of womanly pride and delicacy had been ruthlessly trampled in the dust!

But simultaneously with this suggestion arose the instinct of the wife and the inspiration of the Christian, teaching her that, scorned and outraged as she had been, her only post of duty, as of *hope*, was her husband's home. Yes, amid all the gloom and terror she caught this one glimpse of heaven; amid all the clash and clang of passion and despair she heard this voice of God.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CATHERINE'S REGENCY.

SLOWLY, very slowly Catherine recovered from the shock of that bitter parting. And then she felt so lonely, so desolate; no mother, no sister, no bosom friend, to give her one comforting look of sympathy, or one sustaining word of affection. And she mourned afresh the loss of that dear, sympathising, maternal friend, always so ready in her loving wisdom, always so ready in any trial or affliction, to give counsel and comfort. And, oh! Catherine needed these; for, like the black scudding fragments of clouds left by the tempest, dark, despairing thoughts drifted through her mind. Yes, she had need, and profoundly felt that need, of counsel and comfort in this bewildering sorrow; but of whom could she seek it? Of none—of none must she seek it. The true wife's instinct taught her that. For even when the retrospective image of his dead mother, her own beloved bosom friend, recurred in the shape of a once possible mediator between herself and husband, her mind intuitively recoiled from the idea; and she knew that, were that dear mother now living, not even of her could she make a confidant; that the religious unity, the integral sanctity, the cherished exclusiveness of marriage would be invaded and broken, and the sweet charm lost by the introduction of a third party—beloved even as that dear, mutual mother—into its sacred counsels. No, unhappy and bewildered as she was, she felt that, by all her hopes of a future happy union, this wretched division must be kept to herself—upon herself solely recoil the burden and the pain—she "must tread the wine-press alone." And even when she prayed for divine inspiration to guide her, the response came from the depths of her spirit, "The Word of God is within you."

And how empty the house seemed because one was away—how gloomy, how funereal! Even the light footstep of a chambermaid in the distance sounded hollow, sending a dreary echo through the many passages of the great empty house—empty, for that he was gone.

It seemed not worth while to go on with daily life at all—

to keep up the fire on the household hearth, or to light the evening lamp, or to order meals for herself alone.

But if Catherine were for once tempted in her sorrow to forget her duties, her duties were not the least disposed to leave her long in peace—no, not for an hour.

Catherine was roused from her fit of deep thought by the entrance of a field-woman, who, with the usual curtsey, and the customary greeting of "Sarvunt, ma'am," stood before her.

Kate raised her heavy eyelids abstractedly.

"Sarvunt, ma'am," said the woman, again curtseying. "Aunt Field Mary is well over it, ma'am. It's a boy-chile, ma'am; a likely little boy-chile as ever you see, ma'am. An' Aunt Field Mary told me to tell you, ma'am, how, thank the Lord! an' she's fotch through safe, an' how she wouldn't let dem 'sturve you las' night, caze you were so tired, an' caze it wur the lassest night Marse Archer had to stay home. An' Aunt Field Mary say, would you please to come down der to her quarter an' see her dis mornin', and how she wants some green tea, an' loaf sugar, an'—an'—*wine*, if you please, ma'am."

"What—what did you say?" asked Catherine, passing her hand over her forehead, to dispel the concentration of sorrowful thought.

"Aunt Field Mary, ma'am; it's a boy-chile, ma'am—a likely little boy-chile as ever you see, ma'am; and she's fotch well through of it, thank Marster, ma'am; an' she say, how will you come an' see her, an' send her some liquor, an' things. Likewise, Uncle Jubilee—its daddy, ma'am—he say, can't he have a holiday to-day, ma'am, an' stay home outn de field, seein' how it's his firstest son an' hier outn seven darters."

Passing her hand across her forehead slowly, Catherine dispersed the last lingering fragments of her bitter reverie, and stood up to her simple, practical, household duties; and then her action was clear and decided. She took up her little basket of keys, bade the woman follow her, and went down stairs and into the pantry, where she filled a hamper with tea and sugar, crackers, jelly, and other little matters, and gave it to her attendant, saying, "Take these to Field Mary, and say that I will be down to see her presently."

"Yes, ma'am, sure 'nough. But 'bout de liquor, honey?

likewise Uncle Jubilee's holiday, seein' how it's his firstest son an' hier outn seven darters?"

"Tell Mary that I cannot send her wine—it is not good for her now; but tell her to mention any other want, and, if it be a proper one, it shall be supplied. Tell Jubilee to return to the field—his labour cannot possibly be spared from it to-day. And stay—what is your name?"

"Nelly, ma'am; 'deed it is, honey. That's my name, Nelly."

"I think I never saw you up at the house before, Nelly?"

"No, ma'am, likely not, chile, indeed. I lives quite distant off, down der on Cedar Creek, unnerneaf of Bushy Hill der, on de outskeerts o' de plantashum."

"Well, Nelly, who is tending Field Mary?"

"*I* is, ma'am. Hardbargain Henny, she long o' her now; but *I* tends her. I tends all de wimmin hands when dey's sick—'deed I does, chile. But, poor creeturs, dey alluz wants der missis—alluz. I never knew dem to fail o' fretting arter *her*—dey don't seem to feel kinder safe widout her, dough I alluz tells de poor ignoran' creeturs der missis can't do nuffin 't all; dere in de han's o' de Lord, not in de missis's. An' dar Fiel' Mary, 'ceitful thing, sendin' you word how she didn't want you 'sturved, arter keepin' on arter us all night to send for you; but I telled her good I wan't a-goin' to have the young madam wurritted long o' her 'fernal nonsense, bein' as it was de lassest night marster had to stay at home."

"Yes, there, go now," said Catherine, waving her hand wearily.

"Nyther wan't it any sort o' use, case I myse'f, dough I shouldn be de fuss to bray affen it, am as knowin' a 'oman as if I wur book edified, bein' as I has had thirty years 'speriments, ten years practisin' on ole Marse Roger Gower plantashum, down in ole Si' Mary's, 'fore I came here, nuss long o' Miss Car'line Gower, wid her fuss baby, which was our Miss Car'line Clif'n. An' dat war twenty odd year ago, an' I'se had twenty years' 'speriments here. Lord, missis, ma'am, whenever you 'quires any 'vice and 'sistance, you ain't no 'cassion to call in any dem derned, infunnelly, roguing doctors, as makes you worse sick, purpose o' gettin' more credit and money for makin' you well."

"There—there—there—there, Nelly, return to your patient."

"Yes, missis, I'm gwine now, ma'am, only I wanted to tell you, while I trought of it, how when eber you 'quire of de aid an' comfort, you no call to send offen de plantashum, case—"

"Nelly, there is one thing that I must say to you now and which I wish you to remember. It is that when I give a direction, I intend it to be followed."

The old woman looked mortified, and took up the hamper, settled it upon her head, and went out. It pained Catherine's gentle heart to speak so peremptorily; but this was one among the abuses she felt it to be her imperative duty to reform—the habits of idleness and listlessness, and the propensity to stand and gossip among the domestics. Trifling as this little incident was, it served to arouse Catherine and place her on her feet; and she did not utterly sink again.

The evening fire was kindled on the household hearth, and the evening lamp lighted, though there was but one lonely woman to feel their cheering influence.

The next day was the Sabbath; and Catherine, as usual, attended church. She felt deeply the need of religious consolation; her spirit hungered, thirsted, failed, and fainted for the feeding, refreshing, strengthening ministrations of the gospel. The old, sad, unanswered problem of unmerited suffering perplexed her. She felt herself sinking into that sad and nearly hopeless state of mind induced by great and singular trials to be borne perforce alone and in secret—when, wanting human sympathy and failing of divine comfort, the soul loses sight of the Merciful Father in the Omnipotent Creator, or, in other words, of especial providence in general providence, and falls sadly, despairingly back upon its helpless self, and says that the Supreme Ruler of the universe, the Governor of countless millions of suns and systems, never stoops to care for a poor, lost atom like itself. She needed to hear the gospel message of love and hope again. But when she entered her pew, and raised her eyes to the pulpit, she was disappointed in missing from his place the mild and venerable face and form of the parish clergyman, whose teachings every Sabbath morning sent her home with renewed love, and sustained her through the week, and she was pained to see in his stead a young man, a mere

youth in seeming, some student newly ordained, she supposed, and she sank back in her seat, saddened with the thought that she would not get the greatly-needed spiritual help from him; for what could a student in his youth know of life's dread trials—of the heart's mournful experiences, or the spirit's deep needs? She felt sure he could not help her; and she sank back, resigning herself with a deep sigh. The opening hymn was given out—

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform,
He plants His footsteps on the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Ye fearful souls, fresh courage take,
The cloud ye so much dread
Is big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

The first words of this hymn fell upon Catherine's surprised ear, filling her soul with awe, for it seemed a direct answer to her thought; and all that hymn—every stanza, every line was filled with meaning for her, and powerful in its effect upon her mind, in its peculiar state of experience. She listened in penitent, grateful, reverent silence, folding her hands meekly and saying within her heart, "Father, forgive my doubts and fears! I will believe it! Yes, I will believe that even this heavy cloud is laden with mercy, and will shower blessings! I will believe that even this bitter trial—this bitter, bitter separation and disunion—is in some way necessary to our moral growth and future welfare, and that I shall see it. I do believe it, for I have had blessed answers before to doubts. 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord.' I do believe it."

God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain,

were the solemn last words of the divine song that awed her into stillness. This hymn was sung, Catherine's beautiful voice joining the choir; and, when it was ended, followed the prayer, so singularly coincident that every word gave voice to the deep silent cry in her own suffering heart.

And then the young minister arose to give out the text—Matthew x. 29: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your

Father;" and here followed the sermon. The manner of the young preacher was modest, natural, calm, and sweet, as befitted the gentle words of the text, and the consoling subject of the sermon—FAITH IN PROVIDENCE—the child-like faith that comes through the heart and not through the head. Catherine had thought he could not help her; never had she been more in error in her life. That pale young preacher had a divine message for her—for her; an answer to her unsolvable problem; a message, providentially, the most direct, pointed, strong, startling that ever fell from lips touched with fire, revivifying the soul of the receiver; a message that satisfied every doubt, and calmed every fear, and replied to every question as perfectly, as satisfyingly as if Heaven had spoken; a message that aroused faith, revived hope, rekindled love till all the soul glowed with divine fire. She was wrapped, entranced, carried away by the eloquence, power, and pathos of this divinely-inspired discourse. She never saw the young preacher before or after, but he had dropped a celestial treasure deep into where she kept it safe—a talisman through all the trials of life.

She left the church loving, hopeful, strong in faith, strong to act and endure, patient to wait. So elevated and inspired was her soul, that it illumined her whole countenance; and when the county ladies crowded around her at the church-door to condole with her on the departure of Major Clifton, and to press hospitalities upon her, and to urge her not to mope in widowhood at home, their benevolent purposes were forgotten in their surprise, and the first words were, "Why, how brightly you look this morning, Mrs. Clifton!"

Catherine promised many visits, and extended many invitations, and, finally, was glad to escape and enter her carriage, to dwell in lonely, loving reverence upon the words she had heard. And she reached home, and the Word departed not from her, neither that day nor the next, nor through life; and, with the perfect faith in God, perfect trust in her future came; and again she whispered to herself the charming thoughts, "I will wait patiently—I will work faithfully. The post of duty, as of hope, is my husband's house and home. He trusts me, at least, even now, with the charge of this great plantation. Construe it as he may, it is a mark of great confidence. I will be true to the trust."

And then, indeed, as she whispered these words to her

heart, hope, sweet hope, inspired her more and more, and strengthened her more and more, and she felt that he still loved her—she felt it by that sure instinct that teaches a woman when she is beloved, though no word, look, or gesture reveals it to her; and she acted upon this feeling, although almost unconscious of its existence as a *motive*. And she knew that she would be useful to him, substantially useful to him, where she was; for with her it was not enough to be devoted, soul and body, to his interests—no, "wishing well" *must* have a "body in it," in order "to be felt." She communed with her heart, asking, "What, besides the service of God, do I really live for in this world? For his happiness. Yes, my profound heart, that is it! For his good, his interests, his welfare. I have not been an obstacle to his happiness. I have not been a stumbling-block in the way of his marrying another. No! for I feel that he loves me as he never loved another; and I love him as he was never loved by another; and has any other the instinct, the inspiration, the strength, and patience to bear with him that God has placed in my heart? I will believe and trust in the Lord and His inspirations. And heart, and brain, and hands—all that I am, and all that I have, will I devote to his service; and until he restores me, that alone shall make my occupation and my happiness."

The next morning being Monday, she arose with the intention of taking seriously in hand the business of the estate. This was now the first of December, and there was a great deal to be done before the close of the year, in financial as well as in domestic and agricultural matters. The overseer and the hired farm-labourers had all been paid in advance, up to the first of January; and Major Clifton had left Catherine twelve hundred dollars in cash for her own current expenses. All this money she had at once determined to devote to another purpose—namely, to recalling some of those notes which would fall due on the first of the year. She determined, also, in order to help to clear off the incubus of debt for the coming year, to try to find a tenant for Hard-bargain, and to devote the rent to the taking up of the remaining notes. She went into a patient and thorough examination of the overseer's accounts, and discovered, with much pain, that he had embezzled the funds trusted to him for the payment of the hired hands; and a stricter review of

his conduct resulted in the detection of other malpractices, that decided Catherine to give him warning. A very little observation convinced her, also, that the "baker's dozen of hired labourers, all his own kinfolks," were an unnecessary and expensive set of idle parasites, of whom she determined to rid the plantation at the end of the year. She finally concluded still further to lower the scale of expenditures, by parting with her housekeeper. She reconciled herself to this last step, when she heard of a place in the neighbourhood to which Mrs. Mercer might go. Yet Catherine did not wish to make these important changes without again consulting Major Clifton; and, perhaps—let the whole truth be told—perhaps poor Kate was desirous to hear from him, and glad of a fair business excuse to write. And she wrote the following note. She had some trouble with it. It was the first (except the lines at the funeral) she had ever written him; and, under all the circumstances, she hesitated how to begin, or how to end it. She disliked to address him as a mere acquaintance, and she shrank from any warmer manner of greeting. Finally, she wrote as she would have written to a friend, thus:—

"*White Cliffs, Dec.* 8, 1812.

"Dear Major Clifton,—After a very careful investigation of the affairs of the plantation, and much patient thought concerning them, I have concluded, if I have your approbation and authority for doing so, that the establishment can be cut down so as to reduce the annual expenditure to about one-half its present amount; also, that the Hard-bargain farm can be let for a sum double the annual amount of what we can save at White Cliffs; and, finally, that the aggregate of these moneys, saved and acquired, will be sufficient, in two years, to pay off the accumulated debts oppressing the estate. (Here followed a more detailed account of her plans.) Please write, and let me know if I have your authority for proceeding.

"Yours, faithfully,
"Catherine."

In due time, Catherine received the answer. She seized it with an eager hand. She opened it with trembling fingers. She most unreasonably hoped, poor girl! for some kind, relenting word—some token of approbation or affection.

Truly, she believed in miracles. This was the precious epistle—

"*Hampton, Dec.* 16, 1812.

"MADAM,—Your favour of the 8th instant lies before me. I beg leave to reiterate now what I said at parting—namely, that I have not the slightest hesitation in leaving the plantation to your own exclusive charge and direction—having no doubt that self-interest will guide your talent into the surest means of recruiting the resources of the estate. Let Hardbargain, by all means, if it please you to do it; remembering that I have nothing to do with that cunningly-acquired little piece of property of yours. Regarding the dismissal of the housekeeper, the overseer, and the hired farm-labourers, whom you consider as supernumeraries, send them off, by all means, if you think it proper to do so. I myself, perhaps, should have hesitated, ere I sent them adrift upon the world; but money-saving is, I presume, a plebeian instinct. Finally, pray govern in your own way, without ever again thinking it to be necessary to consult,

"Your servant,

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

CHAPTER XXXV.

CATHERINE'S PROGRESS.

CATHERINE'S arrangements for the year were all completed by the first of January; and with less inconvenience to others, and consequently with less pain to herself, than she had dared to anticipate.

She heard that Turnbull, the cashiered overseer, had purchased a piece of land in the valley—(doubtless with the embezzled funds, but of that she did not think)—built upon it a log-cabin, and set up as a farmer upon his own footing; and that he had taken his tribe of sons and nephews to assist him. She was very much pleased to know that they were out of the way of swindling others as they had swindled Clifton, and also that they were equally removed from want and suffering.

Mrs. Mercer, by her warm recommendation, had found a

very eligible situation as housekeeper to an elderly single gentleman—a planter in the neighbourhood—and her benevolence was set at rest in regard to the old woman.

Lastly, she had let Hardbargain to excellent tenants—a young New Englander and his wife, who took it ready-furnished and stocked as it was, and designed to work the land and keep a school.

The negroes had their usual carnival at Christmas, lasting till after New Year; during which, all that had been engaged in the last twelve months were married, and wedding-parties were given and dances got up, &c. &c.

But on the second of January, Catherine caused them all to be assembled in her presence, and told them that she should, on the next Monday and thereafter, set them to work in earnest; that their overseer was gone—("Thank Marster Lord for that!" exclaimed several)—but that she herself would be their overseer for the ensuing year. ("You'll be fair, young mistress! We ain't afeard o' you," said the same.) She waved her hand for silence and attention, and then informed them farther—that though they should find her hereafter as heretofore, just, and moderate, and merciful, ready to give ear to their complaints, and settle their difficulties, and reward their zeal, yet that she should certainly require a more steady and systematic application to their duties than they had ever before given. She said, in conclusion, that their health, comfort, improvement, and happiness should be her care; but that even in this also she should need their co-operation. ("You shall hab it, missis—'deed you shall, honey," from some of the older negroes.) Finally she dismissed them, telling them that she wished to see them all together again on Sunday evening at early candle-light, in the spinning-room, where she desired that they should assemble quietly.

On Saturday evening, when the women were done spinning, Catherine directed that all the wheels should be taken to one corner of the room, and crowded together, and that the settees and benches from the piazza and lawns should be brought in and arranged around the walls; and finally that a little reading-stand and chair should be brought for her own use. These preparations occupied but ten minutes, and the room was fitted up for family worship.

On Sunday evening, at the appointed hour, Catherine met

her assembled labourers and servants there. When they were all seated and perfectly still and attentive, she said to them, "I desired your presence here this Sabbath evening, that I might make a proposition to you. I have been thinking that we ought not to finish every day without remembering and returning thanks to our heavenly Father for His daily bounties, protection, and mercies to us, and asking a continuance of the same blessings; and I think we should not dare to lie down and commit ourselves to that helpless sleep that so resembles death without confessing to our Lord the sins we have committed against him during the day, imploring His forgiveness of them, and asking His watchful care over us during the darkness of the night and the defencelessness of sleep. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, yes, missis, we do — we do, indeed," answered several of the elder negroes clearly—while a modest murmur of assent ran through the assembly. The negroes are strongly inclined to worship, and ever ready to co-operate in anything of that sacred character.

Catherine resumed, "We should each do this in private by our own bedsides; but we should also do it together as a household—as the creatures of one God, the children of one Father." She paused a moment in thought, and then spoke again. "I have been also reflecting that you ought all to know more of the Bible than you have as yet had any opportunity of knowing; and I think that most of you would be pleased to know more." She paused for an answer.

"Yes, yes, missis, we do," chimed in many eager voices, old and young.

"I know you do. Well, then, henceforth we will assemble in this room every evening just before bed-time, and, as a household of the Lord, a family of one Father, spend a short time together in reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures, and in prayer. In beginning to read the Bible with you, I shall commence with the first chapter of the New Testament, and read a chapter every night, until we regularly read it through; and afterwards, in the same manner, we will go through David's Psalms and the Prophets."

Catherine finished and sat down, made a sign for silence, and opened the New Testament and commenced her reading. Never had reader a more attentive or interested audience. She passed over the long, hard genealogical table in the first

part of the chapter, and began with the Angel's visit to the Virgin Mary, and read also the second chapter, describing the birth and infancy of the Saviour, sometimes stopping to give explanations, which she knew the simplicity of her audience made necessary. The family service was concluded with a prayer, and the servants dismissed.

And this evening service became thenceforth a daily practice; and Catherine's people learned more of the life and doctrines of the Saviour from her than they would have acquired in a lifetime's attendance upon learned ministers, who preach only for the educated.

On Monday morning, Catherine entered upon her assumed duty of overseer; and never were the affairs of a plantation better administered than by her. Her "good will was to it," and all her faculties brought to bear upon the business; and although she kept a firm hold upon the reins of government, exacted the complete fulfilment of every duty, and kept steadily at their post every man and woman, yet never was a mistress more beloved and venerated; and certainly never was one so faithfully served. All subordinates need—not harsh nor lax government, but a steady, systematic, rational government, which they can understand and be satisfied with; and such an one was that of Catherine. Her administration was for her people a very wholesome change from the capricious tyranny of the late overseer, who had been accustomed to permit the utmost licence and laxity among the labourers for four or five days; and then, growing alarmed, to hurry and worry, and drive and maltreat them for a week, to make up for lost time. Catherine's government was regular, firm, just, and merciful; and she was loved, respected, and served accordingly. There were some exceptions; but they were very few and unimportant, and soon fell under the general rule.

And thus, in the perfect performance of every duty, domestic and social, that devolved upon her as wife, friend, mistress, and Christian, Catherine passed the winter. The spring brought the usual accession of busy work, and she gave herself up to its direction with untiring energy and activity. She prayed, and laboured, and trusted in Heaven; and Heaven prospered her work, and all went well. Before the first of June, she had paid off all those heavy notes which had been accumulating interest so long. There were

other heavy debts; but she saw her way clearly through, discharging them before the end of the current year.

But she never, never heard from Major Clifton. He seemed just as lost to her as if the grave had received him. She took all the principal newspapers, for the sake of keeping the run of the campaign; and, oh! often her cheeks and very lips paled, and her heart sickened and sank with terror, to read of the awful perils of war, and to think that he was exposed to them; but terror was not the only emotion raised by these descriptions of engagements. No—her whole soul glowed with patriotic ardour when she read of the gallant repulse of the combined land and naval forces of the British, under Admirals Warren and Cockburn, and General Sir Sydney Beckwith, from Craney Island, by the American troops; and her heart swelled with love and enthusiasm when in the same account she saw her husband's name mentioned with the highest encomiums upon his bravery, discretion, and invaluable services.

Autumn came, bringing along with its other associations intensely distinct images of the last sweet, calm days she had passed at Hardbargain with her dying mother; and these vivid recollections stimulated afresh her devotion and her energy. During her administration, to clear the estate of debt, and, at its close, to restore it unencumbered into the hands of her husband, was now her dear object. When the harvest was gathered in, she consulted several of her most intelligent and enterprising neighbours concerning the state of the agricultural markets, and afterwards proceeded to Baltimore in person in order to obtain the best possible prices for her crops. She succeeded in effecting highly advantageous sales, and with the proceeds she returned home and paid off several of those heavy debts.

And so the autumn passed, and winter came, with its leisure, its stormy days, and its long nights. Nothing occurred to break the monotony of daily life until the last of December, when she collected the half-year's rent from Hardbargain, and paid off all the remaining debts, except one inconsiderable note of six hundred dollars. On the morning of the first of January, she sent as usual to the village post-office for her papers. When the boy returned, he handed her a letter directed in the handwriting of Major Clifton Oh! joy at last! she tore open the envelope, and seized the

inclosure—it was nothing but a cheque upon the Bank of Richmond for five hundred dollars. She let it fall unheeded, covered her face with her hands, and wept silently; but when her fit of silent weeping was over, she arose, took the cheque, went and collected what money she had left in the house, and ordered her carriage and drove to L——, and took up that last note. Then Catherine had the joy of seeing the property entirely free from debt.

And so passed the winter and came the spring of 1814, and still she heard nothing from Major Clifton; and since reading the account of his gallant conduct on Craney Island, she learned nothing of him; and still from her loophole of retreat she anxiously watched the progress of the war, seizing upon all the published accounts, and reading them with the greatest avidity. How diligently she searched the papers to find his name! and how eagerly her eyes darted down upon any officer's name beginning with a C, which always turned out to be Crutchfield, Corbin, Carey, anything but Clifton! Oh, how barren was all this war news, after all!

Reading frequent and extremely exaggerated accounts of the barbarities committed in the progress of an unsparing war, is it strange that Catherine sickened with terror and anxiety for the safety of him who was exposed to all its horrors?

At length the shock came. It was on the evening of the day after harvest-home, and she had given all her people a holiday, even down to the messenger whose daily duty it was to bring her papers from the post-office, telling him that he might take the whole day, and bring her the mail when he returned home at night. Thus, instead of receiving her paper, as usual, in the morning, Catherine had to wait until the boy's return in the evening. She was sitting in the spinning-room, awaiting the assembling of her servants, whom she had just summoned to evening worship, when they all entered, and with them the post-boy, who came up and laid before her the single paper that had come that day. She took it, to lay aside until after the evening's devotions were over—but a magic name on the outside arrested her attention. She caught up the paper, and read in large capitals—

"ENGAGEMENT AT ST. LEONARD'S. British forces under Admiral Cockburn repulsed with considerable loss. Major Clifton dangerously wounded."

She read no farther—the room swam around her—she reeled, and fell into the arms of Henny, who sprang forward to receive her. Her people crowded around her in great anxiety. But only one moment she fainted thus; then she recovered, controlled herself, resumed her seat, and, after sending the servants all back to their places by a wave of her hand, opened the Bible, and commenced the evening's exercises. Her face was very pale, her hands quivered in turning the leaves, and her voice faltered so as to be nearly inaudible; but she persevered, and got through with the service, even unto the benediction. After it was all over, she detained them a moment by a gesture, and then said, "Your master has been dangerously wounded."

Murmurs of surprise, grief, and anxiety agitated the assembly, and testified to their affectionate concern.

"Go now quietly to your homes, and to-morrow, perhaps, I may be able to tell you more."

They dispersed slowly, turning glances of uneasiness and distress at the silent anguish of her countenance.

She, too, went out. How she spent the night is best known to Heaven. In the morning, when she appeared among her household, the wasted cheeks, the sunken eyes, the hollow temples, and the written agony of the brow, alone proved the consuming sorrow of her heart.

"Jack—I want Jack," she said, as soon as she reached her parlour. And the favourite servant appeared before her. "Jack, I think you love me," she said.

"Try me, mist'ess dear, an' see ef I doesn't."

"And I think you love your master?"

"Ah, my Lor'! Try me—jes on'y try me, mist'ess—dat's all."

"I wish you to go to him from me."

"Oh, do—*do* sen' me, mist'ess! It's war I longs for to be."

"I shall. The distance is over a hundred miles. You must pick the best horse in the stable, and start within an hour, and ride day and night until you reach your destination."

"'Deed, mist'ess, I won't let de grass grow onnerneaf of my feet."

"Very well, then, go now. Have you had your breakfast?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Go now, then, and prepare for your journey, while I write you a pass; and when you are quite ready, come to me, and I will give you farther directions about your journey."

Jack hastened out; and his mistress remained for a few minutes, with her hands pressed to her heart, repeating to herself, with agonising earnestness, "Would—oh, would to Heaven, I, too, might go!" Soon she started, as with sudden recollection, and hurried off to write the pass, and the directions about the road; and when, in less than half an hour, Jack appeared before her again, she was ready for him. "Here," she said, "is your pass, and written directions, lest you should forget what I tell you."

"Nebber fear me forgettin', mist'ess, dear."

"You must take the road to Alexandria, which is seventy miles from here. When you reach that town, take the ferry-boat and cross the Potomac to the Maryland side. Then inquire your road to the village of Benedict, on the Patuxent, which is thirty or forty miles further down the country. When you reach the village, ask the way to St. Leonard's. Arrived at your journey's end, find Colonel Wadsworth, or Major Stuart, or Captain Miller; show your pass and tell your errand, and they will direct you where to find your master. Do you understand?"

"Yes, mist'ess."

"All this that I have told you is written down here on this piece of parchment; take care of it, lest you should forget and lose your way."

"Yes, ma'am, I'll be berry cautiencious."

"And now listen to me, Jack." Her voice broke down, some emotion seemed struggling in her bosom for expression—she quelled it and went on. "When you find your master, write to me at once; thank Heaven, I taught you to write! Write then to me at once, and tell me how he is. Will you promise me that?"

"Faithful, mist'ess, faithful."

"And, Jack, when you have once found him, be faithful unto death to him. Never leave him. Nurse him, wait on him, watch over him day and night—do so, if you love him, Jack." Again the inward struggle choked her voice; and when she resumed, it was with broken and faltering accents. "And, Jack, attend—take this note; and when his fever is off—mind you, when he is calm—give it to him."

"Yes, mist'ess, dear."

"That is all I have to say to you. Now hasten. Good bye; and may Heaven bless and speed you!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE NIGHT JOURNEY.

NEARLY a fortnight of extreme anxiety passed away, during which Catherine heard nothing from her messenger. On the evening of the thirteenth day of his departure, however, a letter was brought to her, directed in the well-known, but, alas! not very familiar handwriting of Major Clifton. Oh, joy! He was living, then, and even well enough to write. With a fervent ejaculation of deep gratitude to Heaven, she broke the seal. But her face paled as she read.

"*British Ship Albion, Aug.* 21, 1814.

"CATHERINE,—Are you, then, destined to be for ever fatal, not only to me, but to every human creature that is faithful to me? See what your reckless disregard of other's lives has done—doomed a poor, fond, faithful creature to a felon's death! Attend, woman! to what I am about to write. I was not dangerously wounded, as the newspapers reported, but slightly hurt, and taken prisoner, and conveyed on board this the Admiral's ship—as they did not report. Thus, the poor fellow whom you sent on this death's errand, not finding me in the American camp, and hearing that I was a prisoner on board the British fleet, true to your command to find and communicate with me, and reckless of his own danger, procured a boat at Benedict, and came out alongside this ship. You know the result, as well as I can inform you. The wretched boy was taken and put in irons as a spy, and has been doomed to be hanged at the yard-arm. He only waits the Admiral's orders for execution. My own inconvenience is nothing beside his cruel fate; yet, nevertheless, I may as well inform you that I, who was upon parole when your messenger sought to communicate with me, have also to thank your interference for being put under arrest; and nothing but the relaxation of strict discipline,

incident upon the departure of the two commanders, and a mere fortuity, affords me the opportunity of writing and sending this note. Admiral Cockburn and General Ross are now on their march to Washington City. And my object in writing to you is merely this: to assure you, by all my hopes of salvation, that unless you, in your unequalled machiavelism, find some way of saving this boy from death, I will never see or speak to you again.

"ARCHER CLIFTON."

Still clasping the letter, her hand and head fell with a gesture of utter despair.

"Why, what's de matter, Miss Kate, honey? no bad news, I trus'?" said Henny.

A deep, heart-breaking sob only answered her.

"My goodness, Miss Kate, deary, what is it, den? is marster dead? Oh, deary me, Miss Kate, chile, don't keep on looking dat a way—'deed, you puts a scare on to me! —don't! 'Sider how it's de Lord's will, honey, an' let de tears come, let de tears come, chile! *Do*, honey! 'Deed, trouble's like de measles; ef it don't break out, it strikes in an' kills you dead."

A gasp from Catherine, and a gesture imploring silence, while she spanned her temples with both hands, and tried to think clearly.

"My gracious, Miss Kate, don't look so gashly, honey—don't. *Is* marster dead, sure enough?"

"He's not dead, he's not dead," said Catherine huskily, while she waved her hand for peace.

"Well, den, honey, long as der's life der's hope, an' no 'casion for 'spair. Is he berry bad, honey?"

"He's well—well," said Catherine in the same tone.

"Well, den, long as he's well, what 'casion you take on so, honey? O my Lor'! 'tain't—'tain't poor brother Jack as anything's happened to?"

"O Henny! Your master and Jack have both been taken prisoners by Admiral Cockburn!"

"O Miss Kate! O my Lor', Miss Kate! An' dey do tell me how he eats his prisoners 'live!" exclaimed Henny, falling down into a chair, flinging her check apron over her head, and beginning to cry.

Almost heedless of her handmaid's violent demonstrations

of grief and terror, Catherine walked up and down the floor, with her hands clasped around her temples, in the very agony of thought. To save the boy from death—*how* was she, at that remote distance, to save him? Oh, it seemed a mockery, a snare, to put forgiveness upon such an impracticable condition! Yet she thought him no setter of snares. She thought over the whole of the letter, searching for a *hint;* she needed not to look at it again—every line and word was burned in upon her brain and heart—she thought over the whole of it, earnestly searching for a clue to action—she found it at length in the phrases, "He only waits the Admiral's orders for execution," and "Admiral Cockburn and General Ross are now on their march to Washington City."

She thought if she could see the Admiral, she might yet save his life—of so little worth as a sacrifice to the enemy, but of such inestimable value to her. The date of the letter was the twenty-first—this day was the twenty-third. "Oh, he is probably executed by this time," said Despondency. "But possibly not," said Hope. She tried to think clearly, to separate the dreadful chaos of thought and passion, and to weigh and adjust circumstances, so as she might decide and act promptly. Admiral Cockburn and General Ross must be near Washington, if they had not already reached the city. Washington was two full days' journey from her home; but every hour was precious, for life and death might hang upon it. She could perform the journey in a day and night. Her resolution was taken. Going up to where Henny sat crying, and rocking herself backward and forward, she said, "Rise, Henny, and go and tell James to saddle my horse, my rough-coated pony, Henny—he is the strongest and the fleetest—and bring him round to the door."

"O Miss Kate! does you think he'll eat 'em sure 'nough?"

"What do you mean, Henny? are you crazy?"

"Admirable Cockbu'n, honey. Does you think he'll eat Marse Archy an' brother Jack, sure 'nough? I hopes not, 'cause you see, chile, brother Jack, he's so poor an' lean, an' Marse Archer, he mus' be tough an' stringy 'nough, too, long o' all dis yer warfarin'. But, Lor', 'haps he'll think der good 'nough for sojers' rations, and give 'em to dem."

"Henny, that is all a notion."

"'Bout der eaten 'em, honey?"

"Yes, yes—*don't* stop me now, Henny! Hasten, hasten!

quick! quick, Henny! Have my pony caught, and then hurry back to me."

"But, Miss Kate, are you sure?"

"Yes, yes, I'm sure. Oh, hurry, hurry!"

The woman went out, and Catherine then sat down and penned a hasty note to her new neighbour, the down-east tenant of Hardbargain, requesting him to give a slight supervision of affairs at White Cliffs during her absence for a few days. By the time she had sealed and directed it, Henny re-appeared.

"Go fetch my riding-dress, Henny," was her next prompt command.

"My goodness, Miss Kate, where—"

"Go, Henny, at once, and don't stay to question me."

The maid obeyed, and her mistress rang the bell, and gave the note she had written to a boy, to carry immediately to Hardbargain.

As he left the room, Henny entered it with the riding-habit.

"Help me on with it at once, Henny," said Catherine, meeting her.

"My goodness, Miss Kate! you to be goin' out this time o' night, an' wi' dem in so much trouble. You didn't ax me to tell nobody who wur to wait on you; but Jeemes, he's gettin' ready."

"No, no, I don't want anybody."

"Dear me, mist'ess, honey, where's you gwine?"

"Didn't I tell you? To Washington City."

"To Washington?" exclaimed Henny, letting the dress fall from her hands, and looking up in stupor.

"Yes, yes, didn't I tell you?—to Washington, to see Admiral Cockburn, and save your brother. I do not believe of Cockburn—I never believe of any one as ill as is reported of them; and I think if I go and make a proper representation to him, I shall be able to save Jack."

Henny stood gazing at her mistress in the same distressful stupor.

"Come, come, Henny! give me the other sleeve round here," said Catherine impatiently.

Still Henny stood and stared in a stupor, until suddenly all her muscles and limbs gave way, and she sank down

before her mistress, embraced her knees, looked up into her face, and said in tones of earnest, deep affection, "Don't go, mist'ess, don't go! don't trust yerse'f 'long o' Admirable Cockburn and his hang-gallows sojers! Don't!"

"I must, Henny. It is the only chance of saving your brother."

"Oh, dear me! Oh! my heart's ready for to break; but, nebber mind, don't go, mist'ess—don't go! Let him die, mist'ess—'tain't nothin' only but death, arter all; and Admirable Cockburn—save his 'funnel soul—can't do nuffin' 'tall but kill him. An', poor fellow! he hadn' long to live nohow, wid a 'sumption in his breas', an' so it on'y comes a little sooner an' a little deffunt like. Don't go, Miss Kate, dear; let him die. I'se his sister, and I'se been a mammy to him; but I sez so, an' he'd say so, too, brother Jack would, ef he could on'y speak 'long o' you! Sure he'd lay down his life willin', an' so would us all, sooner 'an you should fall in wid Admirable Cockburn."

"I know it, Henny; I know it. Don't talk to me any longer, though every word you say but fixes my resolution to go."

"O Miss Kate! oh, don't, don't!" exclaimed Henny, clasping her knees and repeating all the arguments and intreaties she had used before. But Catherine was firm as sad.

"If you mus' make an effort, sen' a messenger 'long of a note, Miss Kate. Dar! do dat—now dat's a good trought."

"Ah, Heaven forbid! I have had enough of risking poor ignorant creatures, who cannot keep themselves out of danger."

"Well, den, Miss Kate, who is you gwine for to take 'long o' you, to wait on you, chile?"

"There, give me my hat, Henny."

"Yes, honey—who's you gwine to take wid you?"

"I told you no one, Henny. Where are my gloves?"

"Here dey is, honey. O mist'ess! dat's susanside, an' nothin' 'tall else. Take Jeames 'long o' you; he's brave as a lion, comes to 'fendin' at you."

"No, James would need rest and food on the journey—I shall require, I shall stop for neither; besides, there is not a horse here who could bear his weight continuously for so

long a journey. My strong little mountain-pony, I think, may carry my light weight to the journey's end with very little stopping."

"O Miss Kate! 'deed I shall pray for you.'

"Yes, do, Henny; that is the only way in which you can help me. Come, go out with me."

"Stay, mist'ess, stay one minute! I'se trought ob anoder trought."

"Well?"

"Long as you will go onattended, please don't be 'noyed at what I'm gwine to say."

"Only be quick, Henny, that's all."

"Well, den, 'long as you will go widout any 'fence or 'tection—"

"Except the Lord, Henny."

"Yes, honey, sure 'nough—'cept de Lord's—hadn't you better put on—hem—a-hem—male boy's clothes?"

"What?"

"Wouldn't it be more of a 'tection to you? Now, der's a suit in de house, you calls to min', as 'll just fit you—dem as 'longed to Miss Georgy, when she were a masquerade-play-actorin' here wid de city folks one Christmas; dey'd fit you to a tee."

"No, thank you, Henny."

"You ain't mad 'long o' me for sayin' of it, is you, Miss Kate?"

"Mad? Poor girl! No, Henny."

"Nor likewise 'noyed in your feelin's?"

"No, no, you did but mistake," answered Catherine, getting into her saddle, while James held the pony and Henny affectionately arranged the riding-skirt around her feet and handed her the whip.

"There, there, that will do. Good-bye, all of you," said Catherine feverishly.

Henny burst into loud wailing. Catherine paused, and laid her hand upon her shoulder, silencing her, while she said, "My poor girl, do not fear. I have committed myself to the Lord! I am in His hands. I trust in Him, else I should not dare do this, which seems to you so much like madness. I trust in Him, and no evil can befall me."

"But, O mist'ess, mist'ess! if you should arter all perish!"

"If I perish, I perish—it will be no evil if the Lord permits it!"

"I doesn't b'lieve de Lord am gwine fur to 'mit it. I feels safe 'bout young mist'ess, *I* does. I b'lieves how ef Admirable Cockburn or any of his jail-birds was to come fur to 'sturve mist'ess, trustin' in Hebben as she does, how a thunderbolt would strike him down sooner 'an she as puts her trus' in de Lord should come to any harm," said James.

"Yes, or a yethquake, if ne'ssary!" exclaimed the more ardent Henny. "I ain't 'feard for you no longer, mist'ess, dear. Hebben is wid you!"

Catherine waved her hand in adieu, gave reins to her pony, which bounded beneath her, and seemed to fly over the lawn. She was fevered, excited, "mad inspired"—say either. Night was closing darkly around her, but its sedative shadows had no power to soothe her excited nerves—the dews were falling, but they had no efficacy to cool her fevered veins; a long journey lay before her, but its length could not discourage her; dangers were thickly strewn about her path, but they could not appall her: her only desire, her only anxiety, was to reach her destination in season, if possible, to rescue this boy from death, because he was dear to Clifton—dearer than she herself, his wife, was, she now thought; and now her life itself seemed of little worth, since the hope that was life's earthly end was laid low. Her only remaining hope was to save this life—her only remaining fear to fail in doing so.

Her path for many miles lay through the deep, interminable wilderness of forest that, rising and falling with the low mountain ranges, extended over more than half the county. Her path was so narrow, and the branches of the trees often so low and interlaced, that a single start of her horse, or a single moment's hesitation to bow her head, might have dashed her brains out against the intersecting branches of the trees; and in the deep darkness of the night, and in the despairing absence of her perceptive faculties, this danger beset her every instant. But she rode on, like a monomaniac, strangely heedless, and, like a somnambulist, strangely preserved. As night deepened, and lowered, and thickened around her in the awful depths of the wilderness, the distant howl of the hungry wolf, the nearer cry of the fierce wild cat, and once the more fearful whistle-signal

of some outlawed desperado, fell upon her ear; but even these appalling sounds struck no terror to a heart stunned by despair into insensibility to danger, and she rode on through these terrific perils, strangely unconscious, and strangely protected.

At length, as she descended the last steep, and drew near to the outskirts of the wilderness, the lights of the small village of L—— gleamed through the interstices of the woods, appearing and disappearing, jack-o'-lanternlike, until she emerged from the forest and came full upon the hamlet. It was so late at night that all the houses were shut and dark, and the only lights were those she had seen in the forest—the lights of the stage and post-office. She passed like a meteor through the gloomy street, eliciting only a "What the deuce was that?" from a loiterer in the stage-office, who had seen her flight, and emerged again upon an open plain, over which her road lay for many miles. Another village gleamed up from the plains, was reached, passed, and left far behind with the same lightning-like speed.

She rode all night, less sensible to danger and fatigue than the hardy little mountain-pony that was carrying her light weight, but straining every nerve and sinew in the service. The night was deeply dark—the clouds thick, heavy, and lowering. She had no means of computing time or distance; but farms, and forests, and fields continued to loom, appear, and vanish, as she fled past them. She watched the east with feverish anxiety for day; but still mountain, meadow, and moorland came and went, as she approached and hurried by them, and still deep darkness hung like a pall over heaven and earth. Vainly she watched the east; for hamlet, village, or town in turn was seen, and reached, and left behind, and still a wall of dense blackness blocked up the orient.

A new and very serious danger threatened her every instant—her poor horse, fatigued nearly to death, was ready to fall, and she did not know it. He reeled and tottered, and stumbled and recovered himself many times, and she did not see or feel it; nay, she mechanically exerted every nerve and sinew to hold him up, and keep him on his feet, while totally unconscious of her own exertion—like a sleep-walker was she in her deep abstraction.

She was in a deep forest again riding for life, and the

veins in her arms were swelled out like cords, with straining to hold the horse up on his feet. She could no longer see the eastern horizon, but it was growing lighter, and she knew that morning was dawning. She rode on, and on, and on, and at length came out of the forest in time to see the level rays of the rising sun striking redly across the fields. The windows of a farmhouse flashing back the early light gleamed upon her vision, and, at the same time, her horse reeled and fell with her.

"Good Lord!" "Are you hurt?" "Run here, Tim." "Call your mist'ess, Peter." "Where are you hurt, lady? can you tell us?"

Catherine awoke as out of a dream, to see many people around her all asking questions, and all attempting to extricate her from her saddle. She passed her hand across her brow, as was her wont when trying to dispel thought, and she looked at them in perplexity.

"My Lord, I'm afraid she's very much hurt! Can you speak, lady? Where is your injury?" said the eldest man of the party at length, lifting her in his arms.

"I—no—I'm not hurt—not the least; is the horse?"

"We don't know, ma'am. I'm sure it's a blessed thing you're not killed yourself," said another of the group, who, with several more, were trying to raise the pony upon his legs.

"Pray put me down upon my feet. Thank you. I'm not hurt. How far is Washington City from this place?" said Catherine, as she stood watching her horse.

"Good forty miles, lady. I don't think he's hurt; but, poor fellow! he's trembling with fatigue," said the farmer, answering her, and then examining the horse, which was raised at last, and stood trembling and blowing.

"Can he take me to Washington to-day?" asked Catherine, as she leaned against the fence for support.

"*He?* Ha, ha, ha! Why, look at him, lady! Besides, can you go there yourself, anyhow? Why, you're ready to drop now! Better go in and let the old woman put you to bed, and give you some breakfast."

"It is true I'm very stiff and weary—having ridden all night. But I must reach Washington without delay; there is one I care about under sentence of death. If I reach there in time, I may get a reprieve and save him. I *must*

go to-day." Catherine spoke this, frequently pausing for breath. When she ceased—

"Some of her 'lations gwine to be hung, an' she gwine to see President Madison to get him off. May depen' that's it," whispered one farm-labourer to another.

"Can you let me have a horse to take me there to-day? I will pay twice—ten times its value," said Catherine, raising her heavy eyelids to the old farmer's kind face.

"Lady, I'll let you have another horse in two hours from this, on condition that you go in to my old woman and take some refreshment, and lie down to rest for that time; and not a minute sooner, and not on any other terms whatsoever, even if it was your father was going to be hanged, would I let you have a horse; because I see very clearly that, unless you take some rest, you will drop down dead before you get a mile farther on your road."

"It is true—it is the voice of Providence, I think. I thank you very much; I will rest. Please take care of my poor pony."

"He shall be looked after, lady. Take my arm." And the worthy farmer drew Catherine's arm within his own, and carefully and respectfully supported her to the house, where he gave her into the charge of his wife, saying, "Here, wait upon this lady, honey; be a mother to her, honey, for she's sorrowfully in want of one."

The farmer's wife placed her in a stuffed chair, drew off her gloves, untied her hat and removed it, unfastened her spencer, and asked her if she would have breakfast, which was just ready to go on the table.

"No, thank you. You are very kind. The Lord reward you. But—rest, I want only rest," said Catherine, ready to swoon, for the sense of fatigue was growing upon her.

"Yes, *rest;* that's all she wants, or, rather, that's the most she wants now. Put her to bed; let her sleep for two hours, and have a cup of strong coffee and a broiled chicken ready for her when she wakes—that will set her up again, and help her to reach her journey's end," said the kind-hearted man.

Supported by the farmer's wife, Catherine was guided up the stairs to a cool and quiet room, where she dropped upon the bed. No sooner had her head touched the pillow than the room, the white-washed wall, blue window-curtains, the

evergreens in the whitened fire-place, the picture of the Annunciation over the mantelpiece—all reeled around her senses as a vision, and wheeled off, carrying with them the outside world, and all consciousness of being.

To her, existence was blotted out for two hours.

"Wake up, lady! wake up! your breakfast is ready, and so is your horse!"

Catherine started up at the voice of her landlady, and gazed around, bewildered; then memory flashed upon her, and she sprang to her feet, and began hastily and nervously to fasten her habit.

"Here is water, lady, and napkins; and is there anything else I can bring you?"

"No, thank you; you are very good."

"How do you find yourself?"

"Better, I think. How long have I slept?"

"Just two hours. I wished to let you lie longer, but my dear old fellow insisted on keeping his word with you."

"I'm glad he did; it was very needful; but you are kind, and I thank you."

Catherine bathed her head and face, and the good hostess combed and arranged her hair, and fastened her habit and took her down stairs, where a comfortable breakfast awaited her. It was yet but seven o'clock, and the farmer assured her that she had time enough to reach Washington by nightfall, and that she would be far better able to do it from having had this rest. She hastily swallowed a few mouthfuls of food, drank a cup of strong coffee, that gave her a sort of fictitious strength, and then rose from the table, and quickly prepared to resume her journey. The good woman followed her with many kind wishes, and the good man set her in her saddle, and, while adjusting her comfortably, gave directions about the nearest way to W——, the next considerable town upon the road; then he gave her the reins and prayed God to bless her. She thanked her kind host earnestly again, put whip to her horse and galloped away, leaving her valuable pony in pledge.

The farmhouse, with its garden, orchard, and vineyard, barns, wheat-stack, and stubble-fields, vanished behind her flying steed. The country was now open, and she flew on and on before the wind; and now she had entered the forest, and she hurried through its deep shadows, flecked with golden

sun-glances. When she emerged again, and found herself in the open meadows, it was high noon, and the August sun was pouring down his burning rays with intolerable power; but on and on she rode, unconscious of suffering in herself, and unheedful of the fatigue of her panting and perspiring steed.

It was two hours past noon when she reached the town of W——; and at the very first inn on the suburbs her horse stopped of his own will, nor could she, with all her efforts, persuade or force him to budge a step. A boy, a coloured woman, and then the landlord, his wife, and all the children, came out to see a lady riding, unattended, who could not make her horse go.

"He wants food and drink, I suppose," said Catherine to the landlord, who at last came to offer her aid; and then she alighted, and, requesting the host to have the animal attended very quickly, followed the landlady, who conducted her into the rustic parlour. She was now so fatigued and stiffened that the act of standing or walking was really painful, so she sank down upon the lounge, and, declining all the landlady's offers of refreshment, waited a weary half-hour, while her horse was feeding; at the end of that time, she mounted again and resumed her journey. She passed through the town, and over the wooded hills that environed it on the east, and came down upon the plains. The heat of the afternoon was of that close, breathless, insufferable kind that always forbodes an awful storm. The sense of suffering was beginning to force itself upon her; and as for the animal she rode, she could not, by any means, coax or drive him beyond a walk. Then her mind became again anxiously concentrated upon the end of her journey, to the total exclusion of all other thought, and all sense. It was in this state that she arrived at the foot of a steep hill, covered with copsewood, ascended its top, descended the other side, and reached a small river at its foot. She drew up her feet, doubled her riding-skirt up over the horse's shoulders, and guided him into the ford; and with the water splashing around, and rising even to the animal's neck, she crossed the river so mechanically, so unconsciously, that had people asked her thereafter whether she had forded a stream in her journey, she could not have told them.

The sun was declining to his setting, and the sky was

heavy with clouds, while still the air was close, sultry, stifling, and oppressive. Everything indicated the approach before long of a tremendous tornado. The shades of evening were falling thickly around her when she was passing through the dense, low-lying forest south-west of Washington. When she emerged from its deep obscurity and came out into the open country, an alarming phenomenon arrested her attention; the eastern horizon was luridly lighted by a low, dull, red glow, like the earliest dawn of a wintry morning. Her road led directly towards this murky light, and her eyes were fascinated to it. As she rode and gazed, the blood-tinged illumination seemed to glow and brighten on her vision, and presently after began to send up meteoric streams of fire towards the clouds. As the distance lessened between herself and the awful conflagration, it began to illumine her path more and more distinctly and fearfully, until every object for miles around was plainly visible in the lurid glare; and then at last Catherine recognised it for a burning city—the city of Washington wrapped in flames!

On descending the road towards the Potomac, a scene difficult to describe met her view: all up and down the river and on either shore were seen in the red glare multitudes of fugitives—some seeking to cross, some in boats on the water, and some landed and hurrying in disorder up the country. Soon after this, she met great numbers of terrified women and children, flying from their desolated homes. The greatest possible consternation and confusion prevailed among these panic-stricken fugitives. The most terrific reports were rife—that the enemy were in hot pursuit—that the slaves had been incited to revolt, and, mad with emancipation and drunk with all manner of licentious excess, were perpetrating more horrible and revolting atrocities than those which at Hampton, the year before, steeped the country in blood and shame.

Rendered by despair senseless as the dead to all these dangers, Catherine laboriously pushed and threaded her way down the road, blocked up with horses, carriages, foot-passengers, baggage-waggons, cattle, and all the miscellaneous emptyings of a hastily and fearfully evacuated city. As she drew near the Long Bridge, she heard by the frightened talk of the flying multitude that the end of the bridge on the Virginia side had been burned to prevent, or at least delay, the pursuit of the enemy. She then turned her horse's head

up the course of the river, with the intention of crossing by the Georgetown Ferry. She had no trouble in picking her way through the thicket under the hills that bordered the Potomac from this point; for every minutest object on the way was made painfully distinct by the light of the burning city. When nearly opposite Georgetown, she descried the ferry-boat put off from the other shore, and propelled rapidly across the river. She stopped her horse, intending to wait and return with it. In less than five minutes it touched the beach, and a carriage with a small party of ladies, escorted by a guard of nine cavalry volunteers, landed.

In the hurried consultation that ensued among them, Catherine learned that the party consisted of Mrs. Madison and her friends and attendants, flying from the burning presidential mansion. When they had turned their horses' heads up the river road, Catherine rode down to the boat, and addressed herself to the ferryman, asking to be taken over. The man looked at her in astonishment, and, when he saw that she was in earnest, advised her strongly against the trip, telling her that she had best turn rein and ride as fast and as far as possible in the opposite direction—that every one had fled or was flying from Washington—that the city was in the undisputed possession of the enemy, who were demolishing, burning, and laying waste the metropolis at pleasure. There was no need to tell that—the fact was awfully visible by the light of the great conflagration. But Catherine still persisted in her purpose, replying to his objections that some one whom she did not wish to desert was in the hands of the enemy; and at last prevailed upon him to put her across.

She was landed on the flats west of the city. Here crowds of women and children, pale with terror, and weeping and wailing for their ruined city and lost homes, waited impatiently to be taken across the river, out of the way of more horrible fates, which exaggeration had taught them to dread. Catherine left them hurrying in mad confusion into the boat, while she hastened on to the very scene of peril from which they were flying. She passed swiftly over the low and marshy fields that then lay between the river and the heart of the city, and entered upon Twenty-first Street, above the War Department, and turned into Pennsylvania Avenue.

What a scene! Volumes of smoke, as from an enormous volcano, were disgorged in massive clouds, and settled like a black canopy over the doomed city. The President's palace and the Treasury building, swathed in their shrouds of fire, illumined all the scene with terrific splendour. Even at the distance of several hundred yards off, her eyes ached with the insufferable light and scorching heat. At the distance of a mile, the Capitol, wrapped in its mantle of flame, sent forth a hailstorm of sparks and burning brands.

In strange and awful contrast to this appalling progress of destruction was the dread silence that reigned over the falling city. All the terror, consternation, hurry, and distraction were left without. Here, upon the very scene of action, all was comparatively quiet. The houses were shut up; and if they contained any inmates, they were hiding in obscurity. The streets seemed forsaken by the conquerors, as by the conquered. There was no shout of soldiery, no martial music, no sign or expression of a grand military triumph anywhere—no sound to be heard from the powerful enemy in possession, except a distant, dull, heavy, monotonous tramp, as of many retreating hoofs. The flames were doing their work of destruction in silence, only broken by the occasional crash of some falling roof, cupola, or pillar, or some reverberating explosion. Catherine passed under the blinding glare and scathing heat of the burning Treasury building, and, turning the elbow of the avenue, came upon a sentinel, who instantly levelled his musket and challenged her with "Who goes there?"

"The Admiral," said Catherine, drawing rein.

The sentinel lowered his musket with a surly "Pass on," followed by a low, insulting comment. Catherine had merely intended to express her errand, and had chanced upon the countersign.

"Where shall I find your commander?" she next said.

"The General?"

"No—Admiral Cockburn."

"Corporal," said the soldier, in a low, distinct voice. The corporal of the guard advanced.

"What did you want, mum?"

"To be conducted to the presence of the Admiral," answered Catherine, with an imploring glance. Perhaps something in her countenance moved the pity of the officer—per-

haps he thought her a sufferer from the devastation of the city; at least he volunteered to be her guide, and, requesting her to accompany him, led the way down the avenue towards the Capitol.

"Did you know, mum, that a curfew had been proclaimed, and the citizens forbidden to appear in the streets after eight o'clock in the evening?"

"No; and if I had, I should have been still obliged to disregard it, for a matter of more than life and death hangs upon my interview with the Admiral," replied Catherine, speaking out of the fulness of her heart.

The distance between the Treasury building and the Capitol was about one mile; and the glare of the conflagration at each end revealed a line of sentinels, posted at regular intervals the whole length of the avenue.

A ride of ten minutes brought them to the encampment of the enemy on the Capitol Hill, east of the burning edifice. Here, indeed, prevailed much of the noise and disorder consequent upon the relaxation of discipline after a day of severe action. Nearly four thousand men were resting, some leaning upon their muskets, some seated upon the grass, and some flat upon the ground, in the death-like sleep of drunkenness or exhaustion.

A group of officers, with their gorgeous scarlet and gold-laced dresses resplendent in the glare, stood watching the progress of the fire. Towards these the corporal conducted Catherine. One from among them advanced, laughing coarsely, as he exclaimed, "Who have we got here, corporal? A woman, by George! and a young and pretty one, too, to judge by the pretty figure. You're welcome, madam. What, afraid? Well, I suppose you have formed a terrible opinion of me from the newspapers, which delight to represent us all as devils. Never fear me. Satan is not half so black as the saints paint him! You shall be far safer under my government than under Madison's. Ross says he makes no war upon letters or ladies. Ho, ho, ho! Ross—*he's* sentimental, you know! Well! d—— letters; but *I* make no war upon ladies either, except with Cupid's weapons—ho, ho, ho! What, afraid still? Come, let's see your face; never saw a shy woman yet that had not a face worth seeing."

Abashed at this manner of address, Catherine hung her

head, until the corporal whispered, "Rear-Admiral Cockburn."

Then she stole a glance at the speaker, whose appearance was not calculated to re-assure poor Catherine.

"What, shy yet! By your leave, my dear!" said the Admiral, chucking his hand under Catherine's chin and raising her face. Poor Kate's face, as well as her hair and her dress, was stained with dust, and tears, and perspiration; and her features were pale and haggard with sorrow, anxiety, and extreme fatigue. The profligate dropped her chin with a start as if it had burnt him, exclaiming, "Whisht! Ugh! Brownies and kelpies, and witches on broomsticks! Oh! ho, ho, ho! Ugh! what a face! Here, corporal, I pass her over to you; you seem to be kindly disposed. There is no accounting for tastes, so—ho, ho, ho, ho!—I make you a present of her. Oh-h! where can I find a dozen pretty girls to get the cross out of my eyes?"

Mortified, repulsed, despairing, Catherine stood by her horse, with one arm thrown around his neck and her head resting upon it.

A low hum of voices around her, seemingly incident upon some one's arrival on the scene of action, and then a sweet, deep-toned voice near her, inquiring, "Can we be so happy as to serve you in any way, lady? I should be most grateful for the opportunity. To be able to render any service is always a most soothing amelioration to me of the harsh duties of war."

"Major-General Ross," whispered the friendly corporal, stooping to her ear.

Catherine raised her head and saw bending towards her a very handsome man, in the early prime of life, of a grave, sweet, thoughtful, and somewhat melancholy expression of countenance, who, regarding her with respectful sympathy, repeated his offers of service, saying, "If I am so fortunate as to be able to assist you, lady, pray do not hesitate a moment to command me."

"Thank you, thank you. I—wished to speak with the Admiral; but—"

"With me! oh! ho, ho, ho! I beg your pardon! I beg to decline the honour! Talk to Ross—he's sentimental, and—responsible! the father of a family, &c.; 'a married

man myself, with several sweet children, and venerate the sanctity,' &c.* Eh, Ross? Oh! ho, ho, ho!"

"Speak with me, lady. I shall be most happy to aid you. What is it? Have you or yours suffered, or received any injury by our soldiers that I can redress? Can I help you in any way?" asked General Ross in gentle, earnest tones.

"Yes, yes, I think you may have power to do me a vital service."

"Name it, lady. My word is pledged."

"His word is pledged! Oh! ho, ho, ho! pledged to a scarecrow! pledged to a kelpie! pledged to a witch on a broomstick! Oh! ho, ho, ho! Oh-h!" shouted the coarse Admiral.

The eye of Ross flashed for an instant, but sheathed its fire as he turned to Catherine, and, taking her hand respectfully, drew her aside from the proximity of the brutal Cockburn, who, in addition to his other graces, was now doubly inflamed by drink and triumph.

"A tryste! a tryste with the Queen of the Kelpies! Oh, ho, ho, ho!" roared the Admiral, holding his sides and bending forward to shout his insulting laughter, and then stalking off.

"Explain, lady. I shall be proud to serve you. Pray have confidence in me, madam, and believe in the sincerity of my words," said General Ross, still holding her hand, while she passed her other one slowly to and fro across her forehead, as was her habit when embarrassed, trying to clear her mind and arrange her thoughts.

But as soon as she was relieved from the presence of the coarse and insolent Cockburn, she recovered breath and self-possession, and spoke clearly and to the point.

"I thank you, sir; I deeply thank you. I will tell you: I heard, in my distant mountain-home, that my husband, Major Clifton, of the —— regiment of Volunteers, had been dangerously wounded in the action at St. Leonard's; I did not hear that he had also been taken prisoner. Believing him to be still in the American camp, and fearing that he needed more constant attention than he could get, and feeling very anxious to hear directly from him, I sent his favourite servant to find him, directing the man to remain with him,

* Words used by the generous and unfortunate General Ross while trying to soothe the fears of Mrs. E——.

and to write me of his state. He, this servant, was a poor, rustic negro, sir, totally ignorant of the usages of war. When he reached the American camp, he discovered that his master was a prisoner on board the British fleet. He procured a boat and boarded the *Albion*. He was taken as a spy, of course, and, to end the miserable story, awaits only the orders of Admiral Cockburn to be executed. I heard that yesterday evening, and I instantly set off, and between that hour and this have ridden more than seventy miles, almost without stopping for food or rest, and entered the city to-night alone, when all were flying from it, to beg this man's life from the Admiral. Now you know, you know how vital is my request, my prayer."

"You could not have done more for your father, lady!" replied General Ross, with a gentle, earnest wonder on his fine countenance. "You could not have done more for your father than you have done for this slave."

"Do not wonder, sir. He would have laid down his life for us. But, oh, sir! time presses—death threatens!"

"Be at peace, lady! The life or death of this slave, of such vital importance to you, is really a matter of so little moment to Admiral Cockburn, that I have not the slightest hesitation in promising to secure for you his pardon and liberation."

"Oh, may the Lord for ever bless you, sir! I never, never can tell you how grateful I am—"

"Peace, peace, dear lady. It is absolutely nothing. I would to Heaven I could really do anything to merit your kind word and kind remembrance, when others are cursing me for what the stern duties of war force me to do!"

"I shall ever remember you, sir, with the deepest gratitude,

"And now, Mrs. Clifton, you must have rest and refreshment. My head-quarters are at Doctor E——'s. His amiable family are at home. They will gladly afford you comfort and assistance. Permit me to conduct you thither."

He replaced her carefully in her saddle, and, taking the reins, led her horse until they reached the commodious mansion of Doctor E——. Here he introduced Mrs. Clifton, who was received with respect and sympathy. Leaving her in the care of the kind and hospitable family, he then set out to seek Admiral Cockburn.

Catherine was shown to a chamber, and afforded the refreshments of a partial bath and food; after which she lay down on a sofa to rest, and await the return of the gentle and generous Ross.

In about half an hour she was summoned to the parlour, where she found him standing. He advanced to meet her, and said, "Mrs. Clifton, I have the pardon here; but I very much fear—" and his face clouded over—"I very much fear it will be too late."

"Too late!" echoed Catherine, sinking into a chair, as she repeated the saddest words in the language. "Too late. Is he dead?" she asked, covering her face with her hands.

"No, Mrs. Clifton; but he has been ordered for execution at eight o'clock to-morrow."

"It is not too late!" exclaimed Catherine, starting up with electric energy. "Give me—oh! give me the pardon! I will take it there in time!"

"Lady, the distance is over forty miles; and the necessary delays and dangers that threaten a young female, travelling alone by night, through a country infested—"

"Oh, give me the pardon! give it me, I implore you! I will take it there safely, and in time! Heaven has protected me through dangers as great, and Heaven will protect me through these! Oh, for the love of Heaven, do not hesitate! Every moment is inestimable when a 'too late' threatens us! Give me the pardon!"

"Nay, lady, I can send a courier with the pardon, rather than you should go, for many reasons."

"Oh, no, no, your courier would want to stop to eat and drink; or he might fall in with some of our people, and be killed or taken; or if he escaped through his explanation of his errand, why, that very errand would be rendered futile by the time lost in investigation. I shall pause for nothing. Heaven will protect and speed me. Oh, give me the pardon! Do not delay! All depends on promptitude. Alas! excuse my importunity; but give me the pardon!"

General Ross attempted to dissuade her, but neither arguments nor persuasions had the least effect upon her resolution. At last, overruled by her earnestness, vehemence, and faith, he yielded, handed her the pardon, and went out to see if he could procure her a fresh horse.

When he entered again, after a successful search, he found her equipped for her second night's journey, and standing in the midst of her astonished hosts. He informed her that her horse was ready, and also that he had provided her a guard to escort her beyond Bladensburg. Then she took a hasty and grateful leave of her amiable entertainers, and, accepting the arm of the Major-General, left the house.

As General Ross placed her in the saddle, and handed her the reins, he said, "Heaven protect and speed you, lady. Farewell, and sometimes remember me."

"I will remember and pray for General Ross while I live," said Catherine; and then she put whip to her horse, and rode away, upheld by a wonderful energy.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE GOAL.

INCALCULABLE is the power of the spirit over the flesh. In the intense absorption of her soul by one hope, Catherine was carried above all consciousness of the excessive exertion, and all sense of the extreme fatigue that was oppressing and harassing her bodily powers almost to dissolution. But a watchful Providence, that had already thrice arrested her dreadful journey, now a fourth time interposed to compel her to rest. She had parted with her escort when past the British outposts, beyond Bladensburg; and by the time she had reached Long Old Fields, the storm, that had been threatening all the evening, burst suddenly, with terrible violence, driving her for shelter into a farmhouse; and again wondering and compassionate hosts persuaded her to lie down and repose, and once more, as soon as her weary head dropped upon the pillow, deep sleep, like an irresistible mandate of the All Merciful, fell upon her, and, despite of pain of body and anguish of mind, she slept soundly for several hours; slept, as the prisoner sleeps the night before execution; slept, as the martyr sleeps in the intervals of torture upon the rack; slept, while the tempest raged with awful fury; while the rain fell in torrents, and the wind rushed through the forest, carrying destruction on its wings;

while gigantic trees were twisted off, or torn up by the roots, and great rivers were swelled to floods; she slept the deep, dreamless sleep "God giveth His beloved." Probably to this providential sleep she owed the preservation of her life; for the spirit that can goad the flesh to exertion unto death cannot save it from dissolution.

When she awoke, the storm had passed, and the stars were shining dimly in the early dawn of day. She started up, remorseful and affrighted to find she had slept so long, and to recollect that her journey was not half over. It was now four o'clock, and she had yet nearly thirty miles to ride before eight, or all was lost! Her pitying hosts tried to persuade her to wait and partake of their early breakfast, which, they said, would be ready in half an hour; but finding her bent upon setting forward, they hastily got some refreshment together, and permitted her to mount her horse and depart; but she had not proceeded many yards before she found that the motion of her steed gave her great pain—pain so sharp as to force itself to be felt through all her intense mental abstraction. She checked her horse's trot, and put him into a gallop, whose smooth, wavy motion, somewhat relieved her distress.

The morning was sparklingly brilliant after the storm; the forest trees and the grass were spangled by the rain-drops; and the slanting rays of the rising sun, striking deep into the foliage, flecked all its green leaves with golden light. Her horse was fresh, his blood was up, and on they sped like an arrow through the woods.

Suddenly she stopped and reeled backwards—that sharp pain again; it pierced her side and chest like a sword; it caught away her breath, and caused the drops of perspiration to burst from her pale forehead. But not for pain, or even for the fear of death, must she pause; she might perish, but her purpose must first be accomplished, if possible.

Bracing her nerves, and steeling her soul against the sense of suffering, she put whip to her horse, and flew on, as before the wind, leaving forest, meadow, and hamlet—farmhouse, field, and flood—far behind her. Again and again the sharp agony arrested her, like the hand of death—but in vain to stop her progress: each time the pang could only delay her a moment, and then on and on she sped, spurning the ground away in her desperate flight.

Before her, in the distance, glimmered the blue Patuxent, the longed-for goal. Oh, that river! for an hour past it had seemed as near as now. Would she ever approach it? On and on she sped, while woods, and towns, and plains whirled behind her in a mad reel. A fearful change was coming over her. The sense of pain, with all other sense, had gradually left her. A stupor of weariness supervened; her brain reeled; her sight failed. Oh, that river! how it gleamed and disappeared, and gleamed again before her. Would she ever, ever be nearer to it? How dim the sunlight was, and how unsteady the ground; and the boundaries of the sky and earth were molten together and lost; and it was no longer the action of her horse, but the dreadful rocking and upheaving of the ground, that kept her moving, moving, moving for ever. Oh, that river! how it glimmered and sparkled, and sparkled and flashed into her brain. Would she ever, ever, ever reach it? or was she going round in a circle for ever? Reason was failing at last: past, present, and future, things that were and things that seemed, swam thickly together upon brain and heart; surely the hour of dissolution had come, for dense darkness and heaviness were settling like grave-clods upon brain and heart. O God, that river! had she really reached it at last? or was it an illusion of delirium? Its waves rolled and flashed in silvery splendour at the foot of the hill, below her feet; but what was that? Angels in heaven! what was that? A sight to call back ebbing life! Down in the dell, the glitter of bayonets and the glow of scarlet coats—an open square of British infantry, inclosing an execution-scene! Clutching the pardon from her bosom, and holding it aloft at arm's length, she roused her fast-failing strength for a last effort, and hurled herself and steed furiously down the hill upon the scene of doom. The flash of steel around her, the gallows' tree, the cart, the prisoner, the fatal noose, and, more than all, close beside her, the form of him—her own, her Clifton—madly loved in life and death: and then darkness closed in upon her life, and all was lost.

As the reins fell from her powerless hands upon the horse's neck, the noble animal stood stock still. Had he lifted a leg, it must have been fatal to the swooning rider; but he stood like a statue, while her form swayed to and fro for a moment, and then Archer Clifton sprang forward and re-

ceived her in his arms. He picked up the paper as it fell from her stiffening fingers, and, guessing its purport, passed it to the officer in command. Then he sank upon one knee, drew her insensible form to and supported it against his breast, while he untied her hat and loosened her spencer.

A little bustle ensued around him; but he did not heed it, bending over Catherine. The execution was stayed, the prisoner released; and poor Jack, half-dead with terror before, and half mad with joy now, had still strength, and sense, and affection enough left to run to a spring hard by, and dip up his hat full of water; and the next instant he was kneeling with it by the side of his mistress, to bathe her hands.

"Who is she?" "Where did she come from?" "What is her name?" "Who *is* the lady?" "Do you know her, sir?" asked some of the officers, crowding around with offers of assistance.

"This lady is my wife, gentlemen! Air! air, if you please!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, waving them off, and giving his sole attention to Catherine. "Kate!"

The sound of that thrilling voice, the clasp of those thrilling arms, had power to call back her spirit from the confines of the invisible world. Her pale, pale eyelids quivered.

"Kate!" he exclaimed again, raising her higher upon his breast.

A shuddering sigh convulsed her bosom—her languid eyes unclosed.

"Kate!"

"Yes, Kate!" she echoed, nodding her head with that quick, nervous, spasmodic gesture common to her.

"And why have you done this thing? Why have you placed yourself *en scène* like a third-rate opera-dancer?"

She raised her fading eyes to his face pleadingly, murmuring, "Your wishes—the reprieve!"

"Well, what of that? Was there no one to bring it but yourself?"

Too feeble to enter upon the long explanation required, she only shook her head, murmuring at intervals, "Forgive—forgive—I could not see him die. Patience, patience—indeed I will not trouble you, love—I will go away again, far away! Maybe God will let me die!"

The last words were breathed forth in a long, deep sigh, and she sank away again into insensibility.

Poor Jack, kneeling by her side, bathed her hand with the water he had brought, and with his tears that fell like rain.

Major Clifton laid her head down upon the greensward, and, rising to his feet, addressed the officer in command, saying, "Sir, I am a prisoner of war, as you know. Yet my wife is in a dying state here, and I wish to convey her to a place of safety and repose."

"Major Clifton will consider himself on his parole, and command any assistance we may be able to render him or his heroic wife," said Captain ——, at the same time showing him a note from General Ross to that effect, which had been folded in with the pardon.

"I think, sir," added the officer, "that there is a farm-house near here, belonging to a planter of the name of Greenfield, where your lady would be hospitably received, and well taken care of. Perhaps you had better send your servant thither to borrow a carriage."

Thanking the officer for his civility and good advice, Major Clifton immediately acted upon it by despatching Jack to the house, while he himself supported Catherine until the arrival of the carriage. He then placed her in it, and she was driven slowly to "Greenwood." Here she was kindly received by the planter's wife and sisters, who tenderly undressed her and put her to bed. A physician was summoned, who, when he arrived, and looked at her and felt her pulse, and heard the circumstances, pronounced her insensibility to be not a swoon, but a trance-coma, the result of excessive fatigue of mind and body. He said that such stupors, if prematurely broken, might end in convulsions and madness—or if left, too, to themselves, might terminate in death; that her state was exceedingly critical, and that her rest was by no means to be broken, unless there was a perceptible failure in her pulse; in which case the stimulants and restorative he should leave must be applied and administered, and himself instantly summoned. And so he left her.

Having seen Catherine thus at rest, and having received many assurances from her gentle-hearted hostess that every care and attention should be given her, Major Clifton took leave, and returned to render himself up to his captors, who were just about to return to their ship. He went with them; and when they had arrived on board the *Albion* an agreeable surprise awaited him. A gentleman in the uni-

form of an American general stood upon the deck, attended by a flag of truce, and Major Clifton immediately recognised Colonel (now General) Conyers, who instantly advanced to meet him, and, shaking hands heartily, exclaimed, "You did not expect to find me here? I have come concerning the arrangement of a change of prisoners. Colonel Lithgow, of his Britannic Majesty's —— Regiment, and taken prisoner by our people in the same engagement in which you fell into the hands of the enemy, is now offered in exchange for yourself."

"Yes, sir," said Captain ——, advancing towards them, "and I am exceedingly happy to say that an exchange has been effected, and to congratulate you on your restoration to liberty."

Major Clifton bowed deeply, and requested the use of a boat to leave the ship.

"Nay, yourself and General Conyers will stay and dine with us?" asked Captain ——.

But Major Clifton, thanking him for his invitation, and also for much kindness and attention received during his sojourn as a captive among them, declined remaining longer, and repeated his request for a boat.

"Oh, mine is here at your service. I am going ashore with you, of course," said General Conyers.

"I beg your pardon, sir; the boat you came in has been taken by Captain Fairfax, who has gone ashore with it."

"Ah, true!"

"Captain Fairfax?" asked Archer Clifton.

"Yes—my friend, Captain Fairfax. Frank accompanied me hither in search of yourself. Some news of vital importance he had to communicate, which he did not impart to me. He could not wait for your return at all, so he went ashore in search of you. He would have found you sooner if he had waited here, which proves the truth of the old proverb, 'Most haste, least speed.'"

"The boat is manned, sir," said a lieutenant to Major Clifton.

General Conyers and himself then took leave of the British officers, entered the boat, and were rowed swiftly to the land. As soon as they had stepped upon the beach, and found themselves alone, Conyers grasped the hand of Clifton, and, shaking it cordially, said, "So, you have won noble Cathe-

rine? Well, I congratulate you with my whole heart, though you have won her from my hopes."

"Won her from your hopes?"

"Ay, Archer, I loved her"

"Loved her?"

"Yes, and love her!"

"Love her?"

"Yes, and shall always love her—highly and purely, though, as a saint loves an angel."

"You astonish me!"

"And I shall astonish you more, perhaps. Three several times in one year I wooed her, and three several times was my suit rejected by her."

"I say you astound me! Your suit rejected by Catherine?—yours? Can this be possible?"

"Possible as that I was nearly driven to despair by her rejection."

Major Clifton threw his hand to his brow and gazed at the speaker in amazement, while he compared the claims of General Conyers with his own. General Conyers, with his haughty and powerful connexion in town and country; his immense unencumbered estates; his high military rank; and last, not least, his eminently handsome person, accomplished mind, and graceful address—General Conyers, in every social, official, and personal dignity, highly superior—and himself, with his limited circle, his debt-encumbered property, his medium post in the army, and his very moderate share of personal attraction: and he exclaimed again, "Catherine reject *you?*"

"Three distinct times, most firmly."

"Why, upon what possible pretext could she have done so?"

"Ay, sure enough! Upon what possible pretext?" smiled General Conyers ruefully. "Upon the plea that she did not love me, save only 'as a sister or a spirit might.' I won her respect, esteem, friendship, all but her love! She was a frank, high-minded, pure-hearted girl. She gave me the greatest proof of confidence she could possibly give, and at the same instant struck the only death-blow to dangerous hopes that she could possibly strike; she told me that she could never be more than a faithful friend to me, for that she loved another."

Major Clifton started, and grasped the arm of his companion; but instantly recovering his self-control, he inquired, in a calm voice, "And who did she say was that other?"

"Nay, she never breathed his name. She could not have done that. She was trying to do me good when she informed me. I remember well her sweet and holy looks and words. At first she flushed and paled, hesitating between generous impulse and womanly reserve; and then as principle rose above instinct, her face glowed with an expression such as I have seen in the pictures of St. Agnes—a warm, high, holy look, an inspired look, such as might well become the countenance of the Virgin Martyr—and she said, speaking to herself, 'There is no good reason why I should not reveal any secret of my heart, if the revelation can help any other soul to tranquillity and strength.' Then to me—'Listen: You are not the only sorely disappointed one. Who, indeed, is joyous that is past childhood? I, too, have missed life's crowning joy—the love of one I love. But what then? If we cannot have joy in this life of probation, there yet remains duty, and the peace its performance yields; and friends, and the cheerfulness their society gives; and God, and the divine comfort his service brings.'"

"She said that? She said that?" groaned Clifton.

"Yes. You seem strongly moved, Archer?"

"I am! I am! You do not know with how much reason. But go on! Tell me more of her."

"She never breathed the name of him she loved to my ear, yet I knew her whole secret. I had suspected it months before. Shall I tell you why?"

"Yes; go on!"

"It was at the Governor's levee, where I was first introduced to her, and where you met after a long absence. I was present at the casual meeting. I beheld the strong emotion that she could not conceal. Some hours after that I was near her, when, unobserved by all except myself, and unconscious of my presence also, she chanced to witness the reconciliation between yourself and your chosen bride. I saw her face grow paler than death, and then the meek head bow in submission, and the meek hands fold as in prayer, and the meek voice murmur low and fervently, 'Thank God! O God! help me to say that sincerely!' I had been in-

terested in her before; but I saw that, and I loved her from that hour—the sweet, the lovely, the Madonna-like maiden! I loved her with an affection as free from passion as it was from selfishness, and as free from both as her own pure, saintly nature and I offered her my heart and hand, as I said. And she sweetly and gratefully declined them, as I might have known before — unveiling the sanctuary of her priceless heart, to quiet me for ever with the revelation of another master there."

"O God! O God!" said Clifton.

"What disturbs you so, Archer?"

"Never mind—never mind! And so, rejecting you as a lover, she won you as a friend?"

"For life, and death, and eternity. Yes."

"That was a triumph! Rejected lovers seldom become friends. That was a rare triumph! But then Catherine is a rare woman."

"Very rare."

"Truly nicknamed Maria Theresa."

"Catherine! Maria Theresa? By whom? By some one, I suppose, who, recognising her strong, practical mind, sees nothing better in her nature—sees not the pure heart and the lofty spirit of infinitely higher value than that."

"Heaven bless you, Conyers, for your good opinion of Catherine! But I wish to put a case to you—only an imaginary case, you observe, Conyers."

"Yes. Well?"

"Suppose you had married Catherine?"

"That is very imaginary! Well?"

"And suppose that you had discovered her to be unworthy of your good opinion?"

"Impossible! It could not have happened, because she could not have been unworthy."

"But suppose that her unworthiness had been made manifest to you beyond all chance of mistake or doubt?"

"D—n it! Don't let me be profane. It *couldn't* have been made manifest to me, I tell you! Could any person or anything demonstrate to me that the sun darkened the earth, or the clouds dropped powdered charcoal, or that fig-trees bore thorns? There are some things that can't be proved, because they can't exist!"

Major Clifton thrust his hand in his bosom, and drew

thence a letter in a grey envelope, and, handing it to General Conyers, asked, "Do you know that handwriting?"

"Certainly, I do."

"Whose is it?"

"Mrs. Catherine Clifton's."

"Are you sure?"

"Pooh! Of course I am! I am familiar with the writing."

"Could you swear to it?"

"You are very emphatic in this matter! Let me see the letter again. Yes, I could swear to it."

"And now will you do me the favour to read it?"

General Conyers, with some hesitation, began to read; but before getting half through, the blood rushed to his brow, and, crushing the letter in his hand, he hurled it beneath his feet, and, setting his heel upon it, ground it into the earth.

"What do you think of it now?" asked Clifton bitterly.

"Think of it?—it is an infernal forgery! If any man had brought me that letter, and said that Catherine wrote it, I should have treated it just as I have done now, to show my contempt for the forgery; and then I should have raised it with my sword's point, and thrust it down his throat, to express my loathing of the forger or the accomplice."

"And yet just now you could have sworn to the handwriting."

"Death! Yes! And for which presumption I earnestly beg your pardon, Clifton."

"And now you are quite as much convinced that she did not write it. How can you explain this?"

"Why, simply thus: that the whole of Catherine's noble life is a refutation of the slander contained in that letter. Sir, it is a d—d forgery! Look at it! See how easy the hand is imitated! Give me a pen and ink; and though I have not much talent for imitation, I will produce you a fac-simile of Catherine's handwriting. I repeat, I beg your forgiveness for saying that it was Catherine's. I said so, because it strongly resembled hers, and I did not know the vile purport. Oh, I trust, Clifton, that you signally punished the conspirator who wrote it. I can well believe that you neither ate, slept, said your prayers, went to church or into her presence, until you had pursued the forger, and punished him or her to the utmost extent of the law!"

They had now arrived at Greenwood; and Major Clifton, without replying, conducted his companion into the house, and introduced him to the planter's family. On inquiry concerning the state of Catherine, he learned that she still lay without any sign of life, except the faint beating of her heart. Leaving General Conyers with his host, he went up into his wife's chamber. He wished to be alone with her. There is something in a sound faith that always makes a strong impression. The deep, thorough earnestness of confidence in Catherine's perfect integrity exhibited by Conyers had shaken Clifton's firm convictions of her guilt to their uprootings, as the whirlwind shakes the oak. Ay, and *he* was shaken—literally shaken, terribly shaken, by strong passion, as he exclaimed to himself, "Oh, would to Heaven I could think as he does! I am no longer a youth, credulous of happiness; but if I could only thoroughly believe in Kate as he does, or once see her innocence proved, it would fill my heart with joy." He entered the chamber, and went up to her bedside. There was a pallor spread like death over her brow. "But she was always so pale," he said, in a voice tremulous with tenderness. So still she lay, so profound was her repose, that her breathing could not be seen or heard, until, alarmed, he stooped and listened, and perceived that her respiration was deep, soft, slow, and regular. Her sleep was evidently necessary, healthful, and recuperative. He stood and gazed at her sculptured, marble-like face, as her head reposed upon the pillow. He had never seen that noble countenance in the deep repose of sleep before. No; and waking, it had always been disturbed by care, or grief, or anxiety, or bashfulness. Now the noble face was in perfect rest. The majesty of truth sat enthroned upon the fine, broad open forehead, with its eyebrows arched far apart, and more elevated, because the eyelids were shut down, with their dark lashes lying long and still upon the pale cheeks; and the beauty of goodness lay folded in every curve of the lightly-closed and perfect lips. She looked a queen in repose—"a queen of noble Nature's crowning," whom it were disloyalty to suspect, and treason to accuse. As he gazed, the earnest faith of Conyers came back with tenfold power to his soul. He more than half abjured his evil convictions, and a flood of tenderness came over his heart. There was no one to see his weakness—not even *her*—the sleeper. He went and closed

the door, and returned and kneeled by her side. He took her hand, and bowed his head over it. From that trance-sleep there was no fear, because there was no possibility of waking her yet. He kissed and pressed that hand with sorrowful passion, murmuring, "For once, for this time, I will, *I* will believe you true, my own dear Catherine. My whole nature starves—it starves, and withers, and dies for a perfect reconciliation, a perfect union with you. Oh, for once, let soul and heart be satisfied—let me steel my mind against the thought of evil, and fold you around with my love, and press you to this still denied, and hungering, perishing heart." And he raised her in his arms, and folded her to his bosom, pressing an ardent kiss upon her lips. That passionate kiss sent an electric shock through all her still life. A shuddering sigh shook her bosom; her lips parted in a light, rosy smile; colour dawned upon her cheeks, and light beamed upon her brow. Alarmed, and remembering the physician's warning that a premature awakening might be fatal, he cautiously laid her down again, and anxiously watched her countenance. She did not awake; nor did the light depart from her brow, nor the colour from her cheeks, nor the smile from her lips. "How she loves me! Her soul as well as her person is mine. How she loves me, even in sleep—even in this trance-sleep, with all her senses locked! How she loves me—my Kate! my own! my wife! How she loves me—yet no more than I love her! Witness this worn frame of mine, that sorrow, like years, has aged! My own—"

A light step upon the stairs, and a rap at the door, and he hastened to open it. It was the farmer's little niece, Susannah, who came to say that Captain Fairfax was in the parlour, waiting to see Major Clifton. He turned back an instant to arrange the coverlet, gave a last glance at the beloved face, and then followed the child down stairs. The staircase led directly down into the parlour; and as soon as he had reached it, he saw Frank Fairfax, who immediately hastened to meet him, and—"My dear Frank!" "My dearest Clifton!" were the words of affectionate greeting interchanged, as they shook hands.

"Well, and so you have been married these two years nearly, and I have never had the opportunity of congratulating you till now! Well, better late than never, though it

is always a mere form to wish a man joy who has an excess of it already! But, indeed, you have the jewel of the world! If you had only waited two years longer, until I had somewhat recovered the despair of my own awful bereavement, I should have tried to dispute the prize with you. Not that I was in love with noble Catherine—I never was but once in love, and I never shall be again; but that I think her just the most precious woman in the world. Nor am I alone in that opinion. I have been in her neighbourhood, looking for her, before I came down here to find you; and there I found that she was deeply venerated by her people, and honoured, sincerely honoured, by all the proud county aristocrats. And the gallant General Ross—we had to see Admiral Cockburn about this exchange of prisoners, and met General Ross in his company—I wish you had heard the brave and generous Ross speak of your wife. As soon as he knew what we had come for, and recognised your name and *hers*, he took Admiral Cockburn aside, and talked with him in the most emphatic manner, seeming to insist upon something—(and be it known that General Ross exercises a considerable influence over Cockburn)—and then they came back to where we stood, and the arrangement was effected. And to General Ross's admiration of Catherine's character, and to his generosity, I attribute the ease with which the business was completed. 'Sir,' he said, at parting, 'had your army at Bladensburg been composed of men with spirits equal to that of this heroic woman, your city of Washington had not been taken.' But where is noble Catherine, now?"

"In a deep sleep, or rather a trance-sleep, superinduced by the excessive toil and fatigue she has lately gone through—"

"'Like a warrior taking his rest!'"

"No; I wish you would not apply that line, great as it is, to *her*. She is not heroic, which is masculine—my Kate—he is strong only through her affections, and a very child in timidity at other times. But, my dear Frank, glad as I am to see you, I wish to know—you have not told me the 'business of vital importance' which Conyers says made you his companion in seeking me."

The face of Captain Fairfax suddenly clouded over. He put his hand in his bosom, and, then hesitating, said, "You

have seen in the papers the obituary notice of a dear friend?"

"No! Who is it? I have no very dear friend out of this house, now—whom do you mean?"

"Mrs. Georgia Clifton is no more."

Major Clifton started back, and gazed at the speaker with an expression of deep concern, exclaiming, "No! Impossible! How could that be? A woman in such fine health!"

"Death is always possible; at all times, and to all persons."

"When, and where, and under what circumstances did she die? I am very sorry."

"She died a week since, at her house in Richmond."

"I am very sorry. The cause of her death?"

"One of those virulent summer fevers prevalent in the city just at this season. Her physicians think that hers was fatally aggravated by the life of excitement she had led, and by the friction of something that preyed upon her mind."

Frank paused, and Major Clifton kept his eyes fixed with interest upon his countenance. Frank sighed, and resumed —"A few days before her death she sent for me. I went, and found her labouring under great mental distress. She seemed half disposed to make me a confidant; but after much painful hesitation, she reserved her secret, whatever it may have been, and drew from beneath her pillow this letter, which she gave me, exacting an oath that after her death, and not before, I would hand it to *you* with the seal unbroken. She said that the whole future happiness of yourself and your wife was concerned in your receiving it; and then, with many sighs and groans—for her eyes seemed too dry for tears—she let me depart. I never saw her again. A few days after that, I heard she was dead."

"The letter?"

"Here it is. You seem very much agitated, Clifton!"

"With reason! Give it me!"

And, receiving the letter, Major Clifton hastened to the opposite end of the room, and began to read it. It was the confession of a guilty and dying woman. She wrote that on the borders of eternity there was no false seeming, and no false shame—that all human feelings were lost in remorse, in terror, and in awe. Then she confessed her mad and guilty passion for himself, and all the crimes into which it had tempted her: the slanders that had separated him and

his cousin Carolyn—the forged letter that had brought such bitter sorrow to himself and Catherine. All was confessed and deplored. Finally, she supplicated his forgiveness, as *he* hoped to be forgiven of God.

The subtle self-love of a man can pardon much in a woman whose motive of action is a strong passion for himself. Great as her wickedness had been, great as the suffering it had caused him, he bore no malice to the dead Georgia. He even after a time resolved to cover her sin from all eyes—to bury it in the grave with her. But merciful as he was in judging Georgia, he was stern enough in condemning himself for so readily believing his innocent wife to be guilty; and he divided his broken exclamations between severe self-upbraidings and rejoicings at her full acquittal—Frank watching him with curiosity and strong interest.

"Oh, fool! fool! fool!"

"What is it, Clifton? Who is a fool?"

"Oh, fool! thrice-sodden fool that I've been! Thank Heaven! Oh, thank Heaven!"

"Thank Heaven that he's a thrice-sodden fool! That's new cause for thanksgiving. What's it all about, Archer?"

"Oh, folly! blindness! madness! Heaven be praised! Oh, Heaven be praised!"

"Heaven be praised for folly, blindness, and madness! Well, Heaven be praised for all things! But what the deuce is it, Clifton?"

"Mole! mole! O God! how grateful, how rejoiced I am!"

"O Lord! how grateful and rejoiced he is that he's a mole! Clifton, what's the mischief? Don't keep on striding about, talking to yourself, with your hand clapped to your forehead like a walking gentleman in a melodrama, which you always detested. Besides, you know there is no legitimate dramatic reason for a married hero to stride about and obstreperate, excepting only jealousy—and you're not jealous? Come, cease starting and vociferating, and tell me the cause—'the *cause*, my soul!'"

"Frank, I've been a fool!"

"That's no news."

"And a brute!"

"Who doesn't know that?"

"And a cursed villain."

"Nay, 'I wouldn't hear your enemy say that.'"

"O Frank! Frank! what shall I do?"

"I am sure I don't know, unless you tell me the premises of action."

"I cannot, Frank—dear Frank, I cannot. The memory of the dead should be sacred, so should the differences of—I cannot tell you, Frank."

"Hist! Here's the doctor."

Old Doctor Shaw at this moment passed through the parlour, on his way to visit his patient.

Major Clifton accompanied him up stairs to her chamber.

When they reached her bedchamber, he noticed that the smile had departed from her lips, and the colour from her cheeks. The old physician put on his spectacles, and looked scrutinisingly at her face and hands, laid his hand upon her forehead and bosom, to get the temperature, felt her pulse, felt her hands and feet, and finally pronounced her to be doing very well.

"May she not be wakened up, sir?" asked Clifton, almost selfish in his impatience for a reconciliation.

"By no means. She must be let alone. Nature is her best physician, and the sleep she prescribes her best medicine."

"But, sir, I have something of vital importance to communicate to her!" persisted Clifton.

"Sir, it may be of vital importance to you, but it would be of fatal importance to her, should you rouse her to communicate it, whatever it is."

Major Clifton was obliged to restrain his eagerness. The physician departed, leaving only one simple direction—that as soon as she awoke she should be put in a warm bath.

Archer Clifton was then summoned down stairs to join the family at supper. There he found a lively, witty, eccentric personage, who was introduced to him as "Our neighbour Mr. Perry." And when the evening was over, this gentleman took an opportunity of drawing the officers aside, and confidentially informing them that the ladies of Greenwood were very much crowded with the company of some relations that were staying with them just then; and that, although they would certainly press their guests to remain all night, the latter could not do so without putting their kind hostess to

much inconvenience; he concluded by offering, and heartily pressing upon the gentlemen the accommodations of his own house. Thanking Mr. Perry for his kindness, they accepted his proffered hospitality, and prepared to accompany him home.

Major Clifton went up stairs, intending only to press a parting kiss upon the lips of his now doubly-beloved Catherine; but when he reached her chamber, he seemed to forget everything but her, and sat down by her bedside, watching the sweet, pale, majestic countenance in its death-like repose.

Ay! gaze on, Archer Clifton; for when you have once turned your eyes away, sharp heart-pangs must be yours ere you look upon that sculptured face again!

He remained until summoned by Mr. Perry; then pressing a fond kiss upon the calmed lips, he departed with a tacit promise to be at her side early in the morning.

In the morning!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

The confidential communication made by Mr. Perry was probably a *ruse* on the part of the eccentric gentleman, for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of the officers in "making a night of it" over at his house. Certainly, on reaching the home of their host, they found company awaiting their arrival, and they passed the evening in the jolly festivity of country hospitality. A luxurious supper was served late at night, from which they did not separate until the "small hours." Thus many of the guests overslept themselves the next morning, which delayed the family breakfast several hours. Therefore it was after ten o'clock before Major Clifton, very much against the will of his odd entertainer, bade him farewell, and set out to return to Greenwood. It was eleven o'clock when he reached the farmhouse. The ladies were all in their sitting-room, engaged in their various domestic occupations of netting, sewing, knitting, &c., when he entered, and gave them the morning salutation. And then—

"How is Mrs. Clifton this morning, ladies? Can I see her immediately?"

"Mrs. Clifton, sir!" said the eldest lady, looking up in surprise. "Mrs. Clifton is gone, sir. Did you not know it?"

"Gone?" repeated Archer Clifton incredulously.

"Yes, sir."

"Gone?" he reiterated in amazement.

"Yes, sir. We certainly thought that you were aware of her departure."

"Most certainly not! Gone! When? how? Excuse me, madam, but where has she gone?"

"We do not know, sir, indeed, since you cannot tell us. We thought that she had gone to join you at Mr. Perry's. We were very sorry, but—"

"How long since she left? How did she go? Pardon my vehemence, dear madam."

"We partake of your anxiety, sir. Mrs. Clifton left us about four hours since—at seven o'clock, immediately after breakfast; she went away on the horse that was brought here yesterday as her own. She left us very much against our arguments and persuasions. We would gladly have detained her."

"Gone! Good heavens! was she able to go?"

"No, sir, assuredly she was not."

Archer Clifton sank into a chair, exclaiming, "Pray tell me, dear madam, the circumstances of this departure, and all that occurred from the time I left until she went away."

"Why, sir, after you left, she continued in the same deep sleep until nearly nine o'clock, when she began to show symptoms of awakening. I sent out and ordered the hot bath to be prepared, and sat down to watch her. As she drew near to consciousness, her face lost that look of profound repose which had previously marked it, and began to assume an expression of suffering. Her brows folded, and her lips sprang apart and quivered, as with a spasm of sharp pain, and her eyes flared open suddenly, and she was awake. I asked her how she felt; but she shook her head and closed her eyes again, and shut her teeth tightly, like one trying to bear silently some sharp, inward pain. The bath was then prepared by the bedside, and we began to get her ready for it; but, on the slightest attempt to move her, she groaned so deeply that we scarcely dared to lift her for some minutes. I knew then how it was—that her muscles were stiff and painful, from the severe exertion of such a long equestrian

journey; and I knew also that the hot bath would relieve her; and the doctor's directions had been peremptory, so we tried again, and placed her in the bath; and very soon the hot water seemed to alleviate her sufferings. And when we put her comfortably to bed again, she thanked us very sweetly. I asked her how she found herself. She answered, 'Better;' adding that she thought, by her hard exercise, she had hurt some part of her chest or side, which had given her great pain, but which was now partially relieved."

"Did she seem very much better? Was her voice strong in speaking?"

"No, it was very weak and faint, and frequently broken, as by some inward pain, as I said."

"Go on, dear lady."

"We brought her a cup of tea and a plate of toast, of both of which she partook slightly. It was then after nine o'clock, and she begged that she might not disturb us, that we would retire to bed, and said that she was better, and would try to sleep again. She then composed herself to rest, and the girls all left the room. I remained watching until I thought she slept, and then I lay down to rest on the other bed in the same room. I think she passed a good night, for I could not divest myself of uneasiness upon her account; and so I could not get to sleep until after midnight, and during all that time I never heard her move or sigh. After I did get to sleep, however, I slept very soundly till near six o'clock; and when I awoke, what was my surprise to see her up and dressed, as for a journey. She looked very pale, and ill, and sorrowful; and, in fastening her habit, she frequently stopped and leaned against the bed-post for support. I arose quickly and questioned her wishes, and begged her to lie down again; but she only waved her hand against me with a mute, imploring gesture. I expostulated with her, but arguments and persuasions were alike in vain—she only answered, 'I must go.'"

"O Heaven! Where, where did she wish to go?"

"We do not know. She was not communicative, and we did not like to question her."

"Forgive me, dear madam. Indeed, I fear my questionings must appear almost rude, but my great anxiety must be my excuse."

"Your anxiety is very natural, sir, and we share it."

"Did she know that I was in the neighbourhood? Did anyone inform her?"

"We cannot tell whether she knew of your presence here. We did not tell her; for, as I said, she made no inquiries, and there was a reserve about her despair that shut itself in from all interference. Indeed, it would be scarcely doing justice to her look of deep sorrow to say that she was the most hopeless-looking human being I ever saw in my life. She seemed like one who had seen her last hope go down."

"Merciful God!"

"We used every method, except force, to prevent her leaving us, though we were impressed with the idea that she was going to you; and after her departure, in consulting together, we were half sorry that we had not essayed gentle coercion; for we all suspected that the lady's reason was clouded."

"Great God! I have driven her to madness—perhaps to death!" thought Archer Clifton; but then he exerted self-control enough to conceal the depths and extent of his anxiety, and asked "What road did she take?"

"The north-west road, sir, which branches off towards Mr. Perry's a quarter of a mile up, which was one of our reasons for supposing that she had gone to join you."

Taking a hasty leave of the family, Major Clifton remounted his horse, and rode furiously up the road, meeting General Conyers and Frank, who had lagged behind on their return home. Stopping them, he communicated what had happened, but concealed his worst fears, and merely said that he presumed that Catherine had left for her Virginia home, in ignorance of his liberation and his presence in the neighbourhood; and that he wished, if possible, to overtake her before she had proceeded far upon her road. Frank immediately turned rein to accompany him; while General Conyers, with many expressions of regret and concern, took leave of them to return to Greenwood and explain their absence.

The road lay for many miles through a dense forest; and they galloped onward for hours without meeting a single traveller or seeing a solitary house. Near the outskirts of the forest they came upon a party of stragglers, whom they judged to be deserters from the British army; but these men, when questioned, gave cautious and unsatisfactory answers—sullenly insisting that no lady riding alone had

passed that way. They next inquired of some field-labourers, who were stacking grain a little farther on. They replied that a lady in a dark riding-dress, riding on a bay horse, had passed that way about two hours before, but not alone; a boy, mounted on a white mare, attended her. Perhaps this was Catherine, and her attendant some chance passenger. They questioned more particularly; and the description given answered to her personal appearance. They asked what road she had taken; and, being told "straight ahead," they set off in a gallop. A few miles further on they again inquired, and were told that such a lady, attended by a boy, had passed about an hour before. Full of hope, they put spurs to their horses and hurried on, congratulating themselves that they were gaining on her so fast.

At length they reached a schoolhouse in the woods, where, tied to a fence, they saw the bay horse, with a side-saddle, and a white pony, with a boy's saddle. Dismounting quickly, Captain Fairfax hastened to the schoolroom-door, and inquired of the master to whom the animal belonged?

"To Mrs. Jones, who has just brought her son to school," answered the teacher, full of surprise at the question.

And there, indeed, sat "Mrs. Jones" and young Hopeful, looking as if they considered such investigation into their property very impertinent, to say the least.

Disappointed, Frank returned to Major Clifton with this explanation, and they looked at each other in chagrin and perplexity—Major Clifton with great difficulty maintaining his self-possession, and concealing the dreadful forebodings that overshadowed his mind. They were now thirty miles from Greenwood, and the sun was getting low.

"I do not see anything better to do, Archer, than to keep on till we reach Washington City. No doubt you will see her there, if you do not overtake her before."

Again putting whip to their horses, they galloped on, passing the great belt of forest, and entering upon the bare lowlands, lying south of the city. It was late in the night when they descended the road leading to the Anacostic bridge. They found that the bridge had been destroyed; and they experienced much difficulty and delay before finding a boat to take them across. They entered the ruined and blackened city a little after midnight. At that hour little opportunity of search was afforded, and that little was fruit-

less. They had much trouble in finding a night's lodging in the desolate city; but at length obtained indifferent shelter, and retired, with the determination to pursue their investigations in the morning. At an early hour they arose, and went out, making inquiries in every direction, but in vain. No one had seen or heard of the missing lady, though many cheerfully suggested that she had fallen into the hands of the British soldiery, who were on their retreat through the low countries. Strongly impressed with the idea that she must be in or near Washington, they were unwilling to abandon their search, but remained in the city all day, and through the next night, before resigning all hope of finding her there. Even upon the second morning, Major Clifton and Captain Fairfax were divided in their opinion as to whether they had better go back to St. Mary's, or go on to R——. Major Clifton, full of the darkest presentiments, was disposed to turn back. Captain Fairfax, on the contrary, full of hope and confidence, urged his friend to push forward. While they were debating, General Conyers rode up and joined them. He said he had but that morning reached the city, and had been an hour in search of them. In answer to their anxious questions, General Conyers informed them that up to late the night before no news had been heard of Mrs. Clifton—that she evidently was not in the neighbourhood he had just left. He seemed grieved and alarmed to find that they had not yet overtaken Catherine, but expressed a strong conviction that she must be on her way home. He advised them to pursue the journey, and, regretting that peremptory duty called him to an interview with the Secretary of War, and prevented his bearing them company, took leave, and rode away—turning back once to beg that, as soon as they had found Catherine, they would write to him at Washington, and let him know. Major Clifton and Frank procured fresh horses, and, leaving their own, set forward on their anxious journey.

The gloomiest forebodings darkened the mind of Archer Clifton. There was one scene ever present to his mental vision—where, at the end of her dreadful journey, fainting from incredible exertion, Catherine had fallen into his arms, and he had received her with a harsh and stern rebuke for making a scene: one look and tone of hers, that filled his soul with remorse and terror prophetic of doom—her last de-

spairing gaze, her last despairing tones, before she sank into insensibility. How plaintively they echoed through his heart—"Patience, patience, patience. Indeed I will not trouble you, love. I will go away. Maybe God will let me die." Would he ever forget those words, that voice, that gaze of unutterable but meek despair?

"I have broken her heart! I have killed her! I have killed her! Woman's nature could not live through what I have driven *her* through! Poor, poor girl! so bitterly slandered! so cruelly tortured! Persecuted unto death—or worse—unto madness! And where is she now? Perhaps the waves of the Patuxent roll over her cold bosom, calmed at last; or perhaps she lives, a mad and houseless wanderer. But I will not believe this, I will not believe it! She may be dead, she must be broken-hearted, but not mad! All-merciful God! not mad! She may be dead; and that would be just, for it would secure her happiness and my own retribution, in the only way that both could be secured, perhaps."

Not a hint of this prophetic despair was breathed to Fairfax. Clifton's indomitable pride, regnant even over this anxiety, forbade the communication of his remorse and alarm, and the great reason he had for both. Yet Frank observed and tried to cheer his friend's deep gloom.

"Come, rouse yourself, Archer, we are nearing L——, and shall be at White Cliffs by nightfall, and who but Mrs. Clifton will meet us at the door, with her gentle smile and gentle welcome; and then shall we not all spend a jolly evening, laughing over our cups of tea at the famous wild-goose chase we have had?" But little effect had Frank's words on his drooping fellow-traveller; only, as they drew near White Cliffs, his depression rose into feverish excitement. Arrived at L——, they inquired if Mrs. Clifton had passed through there, and were informed that she had not. It was long after nightfall that they reached White Cliffs. Here the terrified house-servants, roused up from their sleep, answered to all inquiries upon the subject, that they had not seen or heard from their mistress since she left to go to Washington. Henny pushed foremost of all to inquire about her "dear mist'ess and brother Jack." But with a gesture of desperation, Major Clifton sent her off unsatisfied, and turned an agonised look upon Frank. Fairfax was almost discouraged,

but, nevertheless, he answered that silent appeal hopefully, saying, "Oh, doubtless she will be home to-morrow, or the next day at farthest. We ought to have remembered that she had not recovered from her fatigue, and that she would probably take her own time in returning. We have outridden her evidently."

Major Clifton rejoined by a groan. He ordered refreshments for his guest, and soon after attended him to his room and retired to his own, not to rest, but to walk about distractedly; and then he burst into Catherine's vacant chamber, and threw himself down upon her empty bed, in the very anguish of bereavement. His long residence in the lowlands of the Chesapeake, during the hot summer months, had predisposed him to illness. His long journey, under the burning sun of August by day, and heavy dews of August by night, fatigue and anxiety, loss of food and sleep, all conspired to bring on the pernicious fever, and before morning Archer Clifton was tossing and raving in high delirium. Summoned by the alarmed servants, Captain Fairfax was early at his bedside, and, seeing his condition, despatched a messenger for the family physician. For many days, his state alternated between delirium and stupor, and his life tottered upon the edge of the grave. And in this delirium all his raving was of Catherine—still Catherine—now adjuring her as his Nemesis; now wooing her by the most tender epithets of affection, calling her his "poor wounded dove," his "broken-hearted child." Often he repeated plaintively her last sorrowful, hopeless words.

At length the crisis of the disease came. The delirium arose to frenzy. His spirit, as well as his flesh, seemed to be passing through the very fires of purgatory. He raved incessantly—now of Carolyn, now of Georgia, then of his mother, and always of Catherine—sometimes calling down the bitterest imprecations upon his own head, sometimes severely reproaching Georgia, sometimes pleading his cause with his mother, and always breaking off to soothe and coax Catherine, as if she were circled in his arm.

At length the frenzy fairly exhausted itself, and he sank into a comatose state, to dream of Catherine, to see visions of Catherine, to feel her gentle presence, and healing ministrations all about him. Then came insensibility, which lasted,

he did not know how long; for all sense of time and place, and existence itself, was blotted out.

And at last he awoke—the burning fever had gone out from his blood, and a delicious coolness ran through all his veins—the terrible nervous excitement had subsided, and a luxurious calm lay upon mind and body, until memory came to disturb it, perhaps to torture it. He was experiencing the delightful sensations of restoration and convalescence, and his physical state alone would have been sufficient cause for happiness, but for one aching, aching spot, one sharp point of agony, as it were, in his heart's core; and when the cry in his bosom found its corresponding expression, the word was, "Catherine! Catherine!"

His eyes had opened on his darkened chamber, where, upon the hearth, glimmered a feeble taper, that scarcely sent its weak rays beyond the edges of the hearth. He knew it must be near day, for the low, melodious detonating sounds of early morning were echoing through the mountains. The chamber seemed deserted: not if Catherine had been living would his sick-bed have been so abandoned, he thought. He turned and groaned from the depths of his bosom, "O Catherine! Catherine!" His room was very dusky—he could not see the presence by his couch—but now gentler than "tired eyelids upon tired eyes" fell a soft hand upon his brow.

Surely there was but one touch like that in the world!

A new-born, feeble hope was trembling at his heart—a hope that he feared to disturb lest it should die in disappointment—that he dared scarcely submit to the test of certainty, lest that certainty should bring not joy but despair. At last, trembling with doubt, he murmured, "Am I dreaming, or, dear Kate, are you here?"

"I am here," she answered softly.

"Darling, are you well?"

"Very well; but *you* are not well enough to talk yet," said Kate gently.

"Dear Kate, how long have you been home?"

"Since the day you were taken ill," replied Kate, at the same time encircling his shoulders with one arm, and raising him, while with the other hand she placed a glass to his lips.

Whether the medicine were a potent sedative, or whether her gentler touch had a soothing effect, or whether both these

influences acted upon him, I cannot tell; but certainly the nervous excitement just raised by the discovery of her presence subsided into perfect calmness, and he lay with his hand folded in Catherine's until he fell asleep.

When he awoke again, it was sunrise, and his room looked cheerful, and the family physician and Frank Fairfax stood at his bedside, with their congratulations on his convalescence; and while they stayed, his eyes were roving restlessly around the room in search of some one else.

And when they went away, Catherine entered, bringing cold water, and came and sponged his head and hands; and then she went out, and returned with his light breakfast. She sat upon the bed, supporting his head and shoulders upon her bosom while he ate. At last, "Take it all away, dearest Kate," he said, "and sit where I can see you. It is you who are my restorative."

When the service was removed, and his pillows were arranged, and he was comfortably laid back upon them again, he said, "Dearest Kate, do you know that I know at last how deeply you have been injured?"

She stooped down to him, saying softly, "Please do not try to talk to-day. Yield to the inclination you have for sleep. It is so needful to you, and will prove so restorative. And to-morrow, when you are better, we can converse."

He smiled upon her, and laid his hand in hers, and, while she clasped it, fell asleep.

With a strong constitution like that of Archer Clifton the convalescence is rapid; and Catherine's presence, as he said, was his true restorative.

The fourth morning from this, he was very much better, and reclined comfortably upon his couch watching Catherine, who moved quietly about the room setting things in order. He was much wasted by illness, and his face looked still more sallow and haggard for the dark, dishevelled hair and whiskers that encircled it; but his countenance wore an expression of subdued joy as he lay and watched Kate. At last, "Are you so much afraid that Henny will disturb me by rattling a cup and saucer, or jingling a teaspoon, that you must do all yourself? My devoted Kate, I am not so ill. Come and sit upon the lounge by me, and let me talk to you," he said, holding out his arms.

She went and sat upon the side of the couch, and he encircled her with his arm, while he said, "My dear Kate, do you know that I thought I had lost you?"

She raised her eyes in gentle wonder.

"Yes, I thought your great and undeserved misfortunes had killed or maddened you."

"It was the approach of your illness that gave you such dreadful thoughts," said Catherine gently.

"Not entirely, dear Kate. It was your last words when you fainted on my bosom. Do you remember them?"

"No; I remember nothing very distinctly from the moment I threw myself in among the soldiery, and saw the bayonets glittering around me, until I awoke and found myself in the farmer's house."

"Ah! don't you remember that in answer to my harsh question—harsh, Kate, because I was still in blindness—you answered, 'Patience, patience, patience; indeed I will not trouble you, love. I will go away. Maybe God will let me die.'"

"Did I really use those words?"

"Yes; and with such a look of hopeless resignation! I thought that I had lost you, Kate. I thought that you were dead or mad, or at least had been driven from me, for you said so earnestly, 'I will go away.'"

"Did I say that? I do not remember. But I suppose I meant that I would go home. And, oh! do you think—"

"Think what, dear Kate?"

She paused, and her face flushed. She had been about to say, "Do you think that anything but your own will would have driven me from you?" But her old shyness returned upon her stronger than ever.

He understood her, and told her so by the tightening pressure of his arm.

"And, dear Kate, we could hear of you nowhere. You were long in returning, Catherine."

"Yes; when I started, I was still very unequal to the return journey. I had weakened myself, and was obliged to ride slowly. And then I lost my way coming back—that was how you missed me."

"And does my Kate know that I know now how deeply she has been wronged, and how nobly she has borne those

wrongs, returning always good for evil? And can she guess the remorse and sorrow of heart that hurried on this fit of illness?" Then suddenly overcome with emotion, he exclaimed, "Oh, my God, Catherine! can you imagine how I suffered?"

"Yes, yes, indeed I know it all! I learned all—all—in the raving of your delirium. Others thought it *mere* raving, but I knew."

"And do you know who forged that fatal letter, Kate?"

"Yes."

"Who was it, then?"

"You said, Mrs. Georgia."

"Yes. It was strange you never suspected that, Kate."

"I did suspect it."

"You did suspect it!" exclaimed Archer Clifton, in surprise.

"Yes."

"And you never breathed that suspicion!"

"No, because I had no certain evidence against her. It would have been wrong to have acted upon a mere suspicion."

"Just and upright in all things!"

"I only believed God's promises. I left my cause to Heaven."

"And Heaven has vindicated you, my Kate! You have seen my sufferings since discovering how unjustly you had been condemned; but, O Kate! I suffered also when I madly believed you guilty."

"I know you did. I do know you did. It was that that gave point to my own sorrow."

"When I cast you into the fire, while you were tortured, *I* was scathed! I loved you too perfectly not to suffer with you. You were too really a portion of myself for me not to suffer through you. I am thinking of that Archbishop, Kate, whose name I have forgotten—"

"Cranmer?"

"Yes, Cranmer! See how our very unspoken thoughts rush together, dear wife! Yes, Kate, I was thinking of Cranmer, who thrust his offending hand into the flames, and held it there, until it burned to cinders, and dropped off. O my Kate! was it his hand alone that suffered, or did not his

whole body agonise with it? And so, my Catherine, when, believing you unworthy, I thrust you into the fire, did I not suffer through you in all my nature? I did! I did, Catherine! Lift up the hair from my temples, and tell me what you see?"

Kate lifted the clustering dark curls, and answered, "A w white hairs."

"*The tears I made you shed bleached them, Kate!*"

She did not reply, except by meeting his gaze with a look of earnest affection.

He resumed. "Yes—even then, when insanely I believed it possible for you to be guilty, even then, every look of anguish on your brow wrung my bosom, every tear you dropped fell hot upon my heart. Stoop down. Let me tell you one little simple thing. I sometimes saw—oh, I used to watch you so closely, because I could not help it, Kate—when I was harsh and stern, I sometimes saw your chin quiver, like a grieved child's; and, Kate, my whole soul would be overflowed with tenderness, which to conceal I had to start up and leave the room, with every appearance of anger that I could falsely assume."

Kate wept, her tears fell fast upon his hand, that she had clasped between her own.

"And, O Catherine! to think that all this trouble I have suffered, and have inflicted upon you, should have been so unnecessary!"

Catherine slid from the edge of the couch down upon her knees beside it, and her countenance grew earnest, and inspired with faith and love, as she clasped her hands, and said, "Oh, no! it was *not* unnecessary. God suffered it to be, and it was well—*very* well! 'All things work together for good to them that love the Lord.' And every pang that has ploughed our hearts in the past will make them fruitful of good in the future. One fruit is, that the suffering of the last two years has drawn our hearts together as nothing else could have done. Because—"

Again, in the full tide of her earnest thoughts, the old bashfulness flushed her cheek, and silenced her tongue. She wished to say, "Because I think you would never have known me so well, or held me so dear, if you had not proved me by fiery trial."

And again his heart rightly interpreted her silence, and he answered her unuttered thought by saying, "Yes, you are right, my own dear blessing! You are right, for I never should have known your full value but for the trial you have passed through. Yet not now only, but always, have I loved you, dear wife. I denied it to myself, I denied it to others; but there it was, the perfect, vital love, as sure as fate. When I first saw you, Kate, I met in your face, in your voice, in your manner—yes, in every look, and tone, and gesture, in your whole unity—something that I had vainly sought through life, something homogenial to my nature, something perfectly satisfying. You seemed, dear Kate, not so much a separate existence as the completion of my own. What did you say, Kate? Your voice, too, is 'ever soft, gentle, and low:' but speak again, dearest. It is something that my heart listens to hear."

"I said that I, too, when we first met—" She hesitated, and her cheek crimsoned; but feeling that he listened breathlessly for her words, she continued, "Well, only this: I felt as if I were wholly yours, Archer—I have felt so ever since."

Again she paused from native bashfulness.

"Kiss me, Kate. You never kissed me in your life."

Blushing and timid as the girl that she was, she stooped and lightly touched his lips with hers; but, laughing fondly, he threw his arm around her, exclaiming, "You child! you child! Married two years, and cannot kiss me!" and pressed her to his bosom, for one instant, in a passionate embrace that sent life and gladness through all her veins; and then he said, "I am not ill, Catherine. I have drawn health from your lips. See who is at the door, love."

Kate went and admitted Frank, who came in accoutred for travelling.

"Ha! where now, Fairfax?" asked Clifton.

"For Richmond to-day."

"No! You will not leave us so soon?"

"Yes; the truth is, I *must*. I have an engagement to fulfil there on Thursday."

"An engagement! Of what nature, Frank, if a friend may ask?"

"Why, the fact is," said Captain Fairfax, growing very

red in the face with the effort of pulling on a pair of gloves, "I am going to be married."

"Married! O Frank! and not to tell us anything about it till now."

"Hem! there was no proper opportunity till now," stammered the young man.

"Well, who is the lady, Frank?" asked Clifton, while Catherine looked and listened with interest.

"The only friend that my dear Zuleime found in all her adversity—Mrs. Knight," said Frank; and then he added quickly, "It was a long time before my mother's pride could be reconciled to this; but Ida's genuine goodness won her at last."

After the first involuntary expression of surprise, Catherine and Clifton exchanged glances, and Catherine said, "Well, Captain Fairfax, as soon after the marriage as is convenient—instantly after the ceremony, if you please—you must bring your bride down, and pass some weeks with us."

"I thank you, Mrs. Clifton—I profoundly thank you; but we are going immediately to England. Ida pines to see her father, who is a country curate in Devonshire. She has never been reconciled with him since her first unfortunate marriage. I have promised to take her to him; and so, immediately after the ceremony, we four—that is, Ida, myself, and our two little girls—are going to embark for Liverpool."

"Well, altogether, this has put a surprise upon us, Frank," said Major Clifton, meditatively running his fingers through his hair; "but when you return, you will make us a visit. By the way, how long do you intend to be absent?"

"Until the spring. And now I must really bid you good-bye, regretting very much that I cannot carry you both along with me."

They shook hands cordially, Clifton saying, "Well, Frank, our very best wishes attend you. May you have much happiness!"

Captain Fairfax turned to take leave of Catherine, but she said that she would attend him down. She left the room with him. And when the door shut behind them, Clifton clasped his hands upon his brow, and closed his eyes, as in deep thought or prayer. When Kate re-entered the room softly, he said, "Come hither, Catherine!"

And she came and knelt by his side, and he encircled her with his arm, and drew her face down to his bosom, and, raising his eyes toward heaven, said, "'A wife is from the Lord!' Even so, O God! How shall I thank Thee? Hear me consecrate my whole future life to Thy service, in acknowledgment of this Thy gift!"

5
'79
11

RETRIBUTION.

CURSE

OF CLIFTEN

PS
2892
.R4
1800z